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"*Everyone therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.*"—MATTHEW 7:24.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	vii
I.	THE BACKGROUND OF FAITH	1
II.	FACING TOWARD GOD	13
III.	FACING TOWARD MAN	26
IV.	THE DEMAND FOR GENUINENESS	40
V.	BE YE MERCIFUL	56
VI.	INTENSITY OF PURPOSE	73
VII.	THE LOWLINESS OF SERVICE	91
VIII.	EVILS THAT LAY WASTE LIFE	108
IX.	THE DUTY OF PRAYER	129
X.	THE GOODLY FELLOWSHIP	146

INTRODUCTION

Thoughtful men and women in our day are concerned as men have seldom been before to get at reality in religion. There have been long periods of Christian history in which this insistent demand for reality before all else has by no means been the dominant note in religious thinking. Men have been strangely satisfied with what was traditional or conventional or respectable, with what was endorsed by the Church, or prescribed by the creeds, or apparently advantageous to society. But today, largely because of the scientific and critical temper of our age, in which sheer honesty and love of the truth will allow nothing to pass unchallenged, we are quite unable to take over our religion from the past, even if we wished to do so. We are no longer satisfied that what our fathers rested on so implicitly, in theology any more than in other fields of knowledge, must needs be true.

We are compelled, whether we will or no, to apply the test of reality to every phase of the religious life. Is there anything about it that for us is merely formal or conventional, or that now begins to appear outworn or artificial or illusory? Is our own personal religion, or the current religion of Christian society, "the real thing"? Or does it show signs of collapsing under strain, as though it could not meet the fierce test of present-day problems? Obviously there is a dismaying breakdown of much that has passed for Christianity. What, in fact, is Christianity, and where do we get closest to its heart?

It does not matter whether we enjoy asking questions such as these, or whether we like to hear others ask them. We cannot help it. It is impossible for us to share in the scholarly life of our generation and not feel the force of this insistent demand for the essential and abiding elements in the Christian faith.

Our Lord himself would be in sympathy with such a temper. It has its dangers and plainly may be pressed to an extreme. But it is the very temper that he tried to introduce into the

thinking of his age. He broke himself against the unyielding wall of the "stand-pat" attitude of his day toward religious things. He labored to make men feel—what was so clear to him—that the popular religion was full of elements of unreality; beliefs and practices that were merely traditional or ceremonial, that were outgrown or even cramping and hurtful to society. He tried to bring men back to such sympathy with God's thought that they could discriminate between the genuine and the false. He told them how they could be in deed and in truth real children of the Father—how life could be reared on eternal foundations, instead of collapsing into early ruin through sheer blundering. But they could not see. They were not honest enough to try to see. Yet we may be very sure that if he had found in them the eager even if critical appetite for truth, willing to search and sift with the open-mindedness of our day, he would have prized it far more than their hereditary loyalty to accredited church teaching.

On one of the days of his teaching, when he had been laying stress on this very danger of illusion in religion, he illustrated in much detail the difference between reality and unreality in the religious life. He drew many pictures of the way in which men deceive themselves and lay waste their characters, when they seem to themselves, and even to others, to give evidence of conspicuous piety. The essence of his contention he summed up in a vivid sentence that will never be forgotten while men live. It may be strenuously denied, but forgotten it cannot be. "He who does according to my words," he said, "is a man who builds his house upon a rock." He builds the character that is unshakable. Life's storms cannot break it down. It is the real thing, even through the ages. It rises out of the truth, and it relates itself to truth at every stage of its development. It takes hold on the strength of God, because it grows to be a part of his thought and purpose.

It was an audacious thing to say, when Jesus said it. He was setting aside the judgment of many wise and good men through the centuries, and discarding certain religious beliefs and practices that seemed to his hearers sacred from long usage. He was setting himself up as the supreme authority upon human character. But the statement no

longer seems audacious. It has been tested from every conceivable angle through eighteen centuries. And never was there such a consensus of opinion as there is today, after this cataclysm of the Great War, that he spoke the truth. The nearer a man comes to shaping his life completely upon the teaching of Jesus, the nearer he comes not only to being morally great but to being the invaluable helper of society. He achieves the highest that is possible for men.

This does not mean—what some instantly think of it as meaning—that one should arbitrarily shape his life by the letter of three or four of our Lord's detached sayings, of a strongly ascetic type—"resist not evil," "sell that thou hast and give unto the poor," "call no man master"—but that he should seek, with an honesty daily renewed and enlightened, to live as Jesus unmistakably and consistently bade men live, taking the spirit and example of Jesus as the inspiration of his life. A man who does this, whether he be like Livingstone or Lincoln or Mazzini or Pasteur, will be a man not only acceptable to God but beloved of humanity. His limitations and his errors may be obvious enough, but his greatness will appear in spite of them, and his friendliness to men will be as inevitable as his loyalty to God.

There is nothing in the world of phenomena more real than character. There is no more efficient force than the force of love that somehow radiates from the personality of Jesus. We cannot get closer to reality in religion than in this habitual submission to his leadership, which he described as "building upon rock." If any man has a better way to arrive at life's noblest development, it is for him to demonstrate it before the world, and society will turn to it with eagerness. But it has never appeared.

Meanwhile we turn reverently to that unchallenged authority in the field of character, to learn what he would have us do and be. These studies are the following out of such an inquiry. What must we do to build our house of life upon the rock? What are the words that we, after so many years, must still hear and do if we would be saved from wasting the irrecoverable years? What commands does Jesus lay on men?

No attempt will be made in these lessons to separate his commands into classes—religious, ethical, or social—or to

distinguish sharply between duties to man and God and self, as though they fell under different departments of human experience. They blend into one another. For the most part they were inseparable in his thought, and though we may profitably segregate one class at times for special study or attention, in a study course as general as this such division would be uncalled-for. In the choice of topics it merely follows certain lines of obvious priority and sequence. The Synoptic Gospels are used as sources for the study, and the daily readings are for the most part from them, supplemented here and there by the Fourth Gospel. Where his closest friends left some word that illuminates his thought, these passages are occasionally added, not as primary sources, but for purposes of illustration and application.

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CHAPTER I

The Background of Faith

DAILY READINGS

First Week, First Day

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.—Matt. 7: 15-23.

The demand for reality could hardly be more sharply put than in this passage. It insists on character as the ultimate essential. It applies the pragmatic test of results to professions of every kind, without any sort of reservation. Professions are cheap. It is easy for a man to claim the faith of an angel or the devotion of an apostle. He may even deceive himself. But let him make good! That, and only that, will show whether his claims are worth listening to. If he does not do my Father's will, said Jesus, he does not belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. My name, or God's name, may continually be on his lips, but he is a fraud.

Character means the choice of God's will, day in and day out, for the whole length of the winding way of life. And Jesus often asserted, and always assumed, that he was himself the revelation of what God's will meant for human life. So he confidently bade men follow him. Where they have really done so, they have helped to make this world seem like God's world.

First Week, Second Day

While he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him. And one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak to thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.—Matt. 12: 46-50.

Again in this passage Jesus put the same truth in the strongest possible way. There was no favoritism in God's household—no inner circle that had a short cut to preferment. He swept clean out of sight all lesser considerations, in order that the actual doing of God's will might appear in its unchallenged supremacy as the central requirement of religion. No doctrinal scheme may be built up—as schemes have sometimes been built up—that in any wise obscures the inevitable demand for godly living, if one is to be a disciple of Jesus.

Notice also how completely, and as it were unconsciously, Jesus assumes that the doing of God's will is the same as the doing of his own words. He uses the two expressions interchangeably, because he felt that his own teaching was only the transmitted message of his Father. "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me" (John 14: 24). "The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak" (John 12: 50). The friends of Jesus, in those Galilean days, were being taught of God through the lips and the daily behavior of their Master.

Lord, help us to count it the greatest thing in the world to do thy will, and may we fearlessly seek to know what that will is.

First Week, Third Day

Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof.—Matt. 7:24-27.

Here is the enunciation of the general principle on which these studies are based. To accept the word and follow the teaching of Jesus is to build one's life on rock. To hear his commands and to keep them, as he said elsewhere, is to live in the love of God, and so find life in its highest terms. He had entire confidence that if men would do as he said, they would be saved from all illusion and mistake in spending life's capital, and would be spared the moral bankruptcy that befalls so many. He presents this plain ethical requirement as the test of righteousness. Nothing is said here about belief, to embarrass for any mind the simple moral issue. A very simple creed is all he asks for—the creed of trusting him as Master.

And yet see what a tremendous conviction of faith such a creed involves—all the faith, indeed, that Jesus ever personally asked of men. To trust ourselves to his direction with complete abandonment, to put in his hands all our little capital of life, to abide by his decision as to our conduct through fair weather or foul to the end, what must we think of a man before we yield him up ourselves like that! And yet, beyond question, this is involved in the simple ethical decision to do his bidding. We should have to believe in him, heart and soul, for life and death. *To trust in Jesus as the one who leads on to life's highest development is to believe in him.*

First Week, Fourth Day

Now there went with him great multitudes: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.—Luke 14:25-30.

It is well for us to face thoughtfully this undoubted saying of Jesus, even though we may not enjoy it. It is not and was not meant to be a well-balanced judicial statement. It is a passionate utterance of deep feeling, wrung from Jesus when he had been cut to the heart by the endless indifference and lukewarmness and self-seeking of men who rather fancied his teaching and dallied with his leadership. It means that a man cannot win the supreme achievement in character by halfway methods. To accept as Teacher and Master such a one as Jesus is a choice that strikes to the very root of a man's being and triumphantly outwears any conceivable change of time or circumstance. It is not to be reached without convictions utterly beyond the common. One must be willing to stake everything on his faith. A tentative trial of Jesus as Leader shows a moral indecision that merely dishonors him and disappoints the experimenter.

First Week, Fifth Day

At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and

lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.—Matt. 11: 25-30.

From another angle Jesus invites men to shape their lives by him. All about us are those who are restless and discontented because of the seeming futility of life. They are getting on in years and yet are not accomplishing anything of consequence. They may be laying by a substantial property for themselves or their family, but their early idealism has worn out in the process and nothing else has come to take its place. Life for them is an enigma and so a burden.

Jesus confidently asked men to take on them the yoke of his leadership, knowing that this very obedience would bring them rest. They would be done with the haunting fear that they were building on sand, and would have inward assurance in all their daily work that they were building on the rock. They could go on with life in calm hopefulness. The world has proved that character like that of Jesus infallibly means peace and joy. Fretfulness and discontent cannot keep foothold in a life that breathes his spirit as its daily air.

"In His will is our peace."—Dante.

First Week, Sixth Day

Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me.—Matt. 11: 2-6.

It is well to be quite frank with ourselves as to whether we approve of Jesus as a moral guide or not. No one can decide the question for us—we must settle it for ourselves on the most practical and elementary grounds. John the Baptist, at a cruelly hard pinch, wanted a categorical statement as to the ground of Jesus' claims. He asked for dogmatic assurance. None was given. Instead, Jesus simply

bade him reflect on the works Jesus did, and decide the matter for himself.

We have the works of Jesus before our eyes, spreading under his influence through many generations. Are we drawn to such a leader as he is, or do we on the whole feel distaste for what he stands for? Beyond question there are many, even in our day, who heartily dislike both him and his ways —though as a rule they are careful not to say so. Only if we are truly attached to him and to his spirit, and with transparent honesty long to repeat the kind of life he lived, can we expect to build our characters on lines of his approving.

The greatest contribution any man can make to society is a life thoroughly mastered by His direction.

First Week, Seventh Day

Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God.—John 6: 66-69.

It is often helpful to face the sharp alternative to shaping our lives on the teaching of Jesus. Probably there are few of us, if the truth were known, who are not tempted in certain moods to distrust him as an authoritative religious guide—as though this were somehow asking too much of one in this modern critical age. Very well, suppose we surrender him as a divinely sent Master! We must look for our inspiration elsewhere. Where do we propose to look for it? Who is to be our guiding light in times of moral perplexity and moral defeat? Who shall set for us "the mark of living light, above the howling senses' ebb and flow"? Whence are we to draw, in days to come, the vivid invincible life-purpose of unselfish love, that shall mould us steadily into something better than we have known?

Jesus declares that his word is a rock foundation for such divinely tempered character. So it has been through centuries on centuries for unnumbered men and women, benefactors of their race. Are we going to be able to find other

foundations on which we can build such a life, without his aid? If not, what is it in him that makes him thus indispensable? We cannot but believe that the foundation on which the highest development is reared is one of truth and not of error.

Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I*

Many have seen a certain unforgettable cartoon by the Dutch artist, Louis Raemakers. It shows the German Kaiser riding down the highway on his war-horse, stern and masterful, the incarnation of relentless power. Around him are his mounted staff, with cloaks and swords and helmets, silent and terrible in the pride of war. But at his side upon the road, trespassing on that high company, is a humble man mounted on an ass, as Jesus once rode in Palestine, his bowed face eloquent of love and sadness—the Man of Sorrows. And the Kaiser, pointing indignantly to the intruder, exclaims to his staff, "Who is this man?"

The biting satire lies in the exposure of a terrible illusion, not involving the Kaiser only. This Jesus Christ, the man of love, on whom the whole structure of Christianity supposedly is built, appears an unfamiliar stranger even in the eyes of one of the great heads of Christendom. So alien is the Master in his life and spirit, that he is an offense and a stumbling-block in the path of those who bear his name and sign.

Its application is far wider than to an imperialism that had outlived the consent of men, yet ostentatiously counted God its ally. It expresses the age-old unreality of a religion that calls itself Christian, while yet squarely hostile to the ethical and social principles of Jesus. Some might say unthinkingly that it exposes the breakdown of Christianity. Just the reverse is true. It is an eloquent affirmation of the impregnable truth that there is no real Christianity save in loyalty to the spirit of Jesus Christ, who taught us what we know of God.

Historical Christianity, formal Christianity, has often been

something startlingly out of sympathy with the Great Teacher and Friend of men. It has exalted his formal requirements in the sacraments and institutions of the Church; it has kept always in the forefront the elaborate creedal formulations of the church councils, but it has sometimes completely broken step with him in his actual life-spirit; it has wandered clean away out of his company. And this haunting fear of unreality, that makes so many in our time suspicious of the Church and its requirements, is the half-perceived legacy from this long period of dissonance between the ideals of Jesus and those of his reputed followers.

Curiously enough, the Church has never formally put the ethical code of Jesus in the forefront of its teaching. The law once graven on stone, the Ten Commandments of Mount Sinai, has been taught to every child of the Church. Even today, as a part of the stated public worship, we repeat or sing the ancient words that forbid us to worship other gods, or to make graven images, or to do any work on the seventh day of the week. But no such place has ever been given to the royal law that crowned all those centuries of slow education and illumination—that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, that we should be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful, that we should humble ourselves as little children, that we should pray to our Father, that we should deny ourselves for the sake of Christ and his glad tidings. As the result, we have seen state churches and national governments that stood, as the House of Hapsburg, for example, so long stood in the last century, with equal frankness and intensity for religious orthodoxy and the denial of the rights of the people.

The world has been wakening very fast in the last fifty years to the searching demands of the real discipleship of Jesus, without which any church or any Christian profession is a sorry mockery. But only in these last few years have men far and wide begun to rouse themselves from the old inertia of long-inherited unbelief, to perceive that for nations, also, obedience to the teachings of Jesus is the only policy that does not set at defiance the everlasting purposes of God, and so invite defeat. The old selfishness of individual men or of corporations or of governments, alike in greed for money or greed for power, begins to appear today

as never before in history in its true light as the fundamental denial and betrayal of the Christian faith. We have lost interest in disputing about creeds, so profound has become our preoccupation with the primary demands of him about whom all creeds center.

Do we wish to get at the heart of reality in the religion of Jesus? Very well, here is the summing up of the actual qualities of character that inevitably appear in those who absorb his spirit—no theoretical or ecclesiastical summary, but a statement out of personal experience on the part of one of the most sympathetically intimate friends of Jesus. Imagine them used as the touchstone of reality for all who profess and call themselves Christians! Here is the list: "Love, joy, peace; patience toward others, kindness, benevolence; good faith, meekness, self-restraint." It is not meant to be exhaustive, but it does indicate the structural lines of the Christian character.

These qualities spring up in the pathway of Jesus. Just as from a mountain on the desert edge you can follow the course of a river by the green ribbon of tree-tops winding across the sand, so you can follow the succession of the followers of Jesus through fearsome, arid centuries, when cruelty and violence spread like a boundless wilderness on either side. They made life blossom around them. Side by side with them there may have been this pretentious illusion of a Christian church full of pride and harsh intolerance, but, as at this day, the men and women who really shared the spirit of Jesus were like fountains of living water for thirsty men. Never has there been a doubt as to the character of those who actually hear and do his words—it is the world's most precious possession up till now. And it is only leadership like this which can ever bring the world out of the labyrinth of tangled hates and passions, through which it stumbles on its way today. Here is reality indeed, as of the supreme force in the moral universe.

II

It is fairly plain to most men that the genuine following of the teaching of Jesus leads out into character of this particularly high and noble type. It is not so immediately plain that such a life of habitual obedience to his example

is a triumph of faith. Yet clearly enough it is only as one deeply believes in him that one yields up to his control for life the sweet freedom of self-will.

So many of us have been accustomed to place a purely conventional meaning on the words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," that we are slow to discern how simple are the essentials of that requirement. In the nature of the case they must be within the reach of any honest and well-disposed soul face to face with a man claiming, as did Jesus, to be a leader sent from God. Does he commend himself to us or not in that august capacity? Would we be content to build our lives on lines of his direction?

In certain European countries the universities were filled with young men looking forward to civil and military preferment. Their governments demanded that they should be baptized members of the state church and should receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. They gave these outward signs of belief in Jesus Christ, as declared members of a Christian community. But by a large proportion of them the actual teachings of Jesus were viewed with derision or disgust: his demand for purity, for self-restraint, for self-denying love to the poor and weak, for a reverent and humble fellowship with God, was to them fiercely objectionable. They subscribed to an orthodox confession, but frankly and energetically they disbelieved in him. They might grow up to be strong supporters of the state church, especially for the sake of the common people; but their belief in Christianity was a deadly illusion, full of injury to society—as this war has so tragically shown.

Perhaps it hardly needs to be said that it is quite meaningless for a man to believe that Jesus was the second person in the Trinity and that He came to offer a substitutionary atonement for human sin, if his own heart is full of a Nietzschean pride of self-will that despises the "slave-morality" of the New Testament. Jesus did not build his discipleship on metaphysical interpretations of his relationship to God, or on any complete understanding of the depths of his own personality. His requirement of the right-of-way in a man's life was as plain and direct as a shaft of sunlight. Did men believe in him and in his works, so that they would stand with him like Athanasius against the world?

Would they take up arms even against a sea of troubles, trusting that he would bring them victoriously through?

The Fourth Gospel makes profound claims for the eternal sonship of Christ; but it states, even more explicitly than the other gospels, what sort of belief in him it was that Jesus demanded of the men of his day—not that he was the Messiah, a fact which through most of his ministry he studiously concealed, but that he was sent of God to reveal His will. The leaders of the Jews denied this; they declared that he was a man of evil heart, with an evil purpose. But of his own truest friends Jesus said, "They believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:8). He wrought his mightiest works before the people, so he said, "that they may believe that thou didst send me" (John 11:42). His last prayer for his disciples was that they might be one in spirit with him, "that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:21). He came to bring to men in darkness the light of the glory of God's love; he was one delegated for this mission. But whether he healed the sick, or raised the dead, or brought the wicked to penitence, the Jews would have none of him or of his works either. They said that he was a teacher of error and an emissary of the devil. They repudiated his leadership as men repudiate it today. Their unbelief did not lie in their imperfect understanding of his person, or their failure to recognize him as the Messiah, but in their moral aversion to him and to his message. How could he lead them to God when they had no faith in him? He stood before them as he was, and they, seeing him as he was, looking him up and down and through and through, disliked him heartily. And all his messages from God broke hopelessly against this armor of antagonism.

But others turned to him as a starved plant to the sun. He came into their life for a few hours or days and they, seeing him as he was, were drawn to him with all the force of their natures. Even though they were very ignorant and very vulgar, they could recognize love when they saw it—especially love that redeemed—and they believed in him. They heard him talk and watched him work, and found him good, and trusted that his goodness was of God. They wanted to be like him, even though they might have been parasites on society hitherto. They were eager to be what

he wanted them to be. So they became his, and slowly learned with the years what manner of man he was who had brought them to God and God to them. They came to the clear assurance that, as one of them said, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

Just here is where the reality and power of faith in Jesus lie: not in selecting and adopting the most nearly correct doctrine of all the doctrines of the person and work of Christ, although the value of the truth here must be past reckoning, but in the fundamental attitude of the soul toward him and his message, whether of repulsion or attraction. There is no manner of doubt as to what he was. His truth and fidelity and courage, his pity for the poor and gentleness with the weak, his sternness with strong oppressors and his fearlessness before the great, his purity and his uplifting love for the stained and disgraced, his matchless self-sacrifice for men to the very limits of life and death—we know it all! Are we drawn by it to him? Do we cleave to such a one, as to the best that we have ever known in life? If so, we believe in him, as he sought to have men believe, so that they would hear and do his words; not grudgingly or partially, but eagerly and whole-heartedly, as children who were coming to know God their Father. It is that inward choice and attachment that marks out all who are building life under his guidance—building character on rock. Here is the innermost reality of Christianity.

CHAPTER II

Facing toward God

DAILY READINGS

Before coming to the details of Jesus' program for life-building, we must take into view one or two of its fundamental features that can never be lost from sight if we are to understand its preeminence in power and attractiveness. Just because they are so fundamental, underlying everything that he said and did, they are sometimes passed over by those in a hurry to discuss his ethics. If what we want is reality, we must try to get at the heart of his moral influence —the secret of that appeal which humanity has always felt to be unique.

Second Week, First Day

And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.—Mark 12: 28-34.

The whole aspect and orienting of any character designed by such an architect of lives as Jesus, must needs be facing toward God. It looks away to the heights. With such an aspect and outlook it cannot be petty or mean or selfish; its uplook and outreach react upon it at every point to determine the lines of its development. In the heart of the dirty, crowded city of Naples, there is a fine old medieval palace, with stately marble apartments, shut in now by tenements. But one knows instantly that, when its walls went up, they must have looked proudly far away across the sea and plain to the slopes of Vesuvius and the blue of the Mediterranean. Only a noble setting could call for such a noble structure. And for the noblest life, only the high and holy presence of God gives scope and verge enough for man's capacity. Walk before God, is the first command of Jesus. Relate your life each day to his will. Live in his love. It is the plan of a genius for life-building, who thinks only in terms of great living, and is unconscious of any dividing line between religion and morals.

Second Week, Second Day

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.—Luke 10: 25-28.

It is not only the realized presence of God that reacts so profoundly on human character. Jesus said that to love God was also possible—and if so, surely this is the highest possible function of the human spirit. We know what the love of money will do for a man, how gravely it affects his character. Jesus knew what the love of God would do for one, how it would ennoble him as no other imaginable influence could do. To know him, to reverence him, to hold to him with pride and joy, as a true son honors a good father, is in fact to place one's life under an inspiration of incalculable power.

We commonly think of this saying of Jesus as a command, as the first of all commands. But as life goes on we come to see that it conveys not so much a duty as an invitation and an inexhaustible reassurance. It is the Magna Charta of human life. It is our title of nobility. God wants us! He has made us for himself. Our filial obedience and love are of absolute worth to him. Each day's commonplace round is prefaced by this sublime greeting from the Eternal, "Live this day for Me."

O God! may I be strong and brave this day in the thought that I am thy child, and that thou carest for my love. May the spirit of noblesse oblige be a ceaseless call to higher living.

Second Week, Third Day

Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.—Matt. 5: 43-48.

It is of the first importance to remember that a Christian character can never be built up out of mere obedience to a code of formal rules, even such rules as were given by Jesus. The spirit and motive of the new life are its most vital characteristic. Most of the ethical and social precepts of Jesus can be paralleled from other sources. His unapproached supremacy as a religious teacher does not lie in the originality of his ethics, but in the new sanctions that he brought to duty, and in the dynamic energy of the spirit and motive with which he reenforced it.

He did not come to bring a new law—even a superlatively good law. Nor did he leave his disciples struggling in the old morass of legalism, in the effort to win God's favor by the sheer weight of their well-deserving. He came to trans-

form life by bringing, as he said, a gospel! What it is lies open to our sight in his revelation of God as our Father, who loves us in spite of our failures, who has mercy on us and forgives us freely. "Be merciful," he says, "even as your Father is merciful." "Love your enemies . . . that ye may be sons of your Father." This proud, glad motive, humble and grateful, is the only motive on which a truly Christian character can be built up. The spirit of a spontaneous gratitude and love lies behind every stage of its construction.

Second Week, Fourth Day

And he spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.—Luke 15: 3-7.

These three parables of grace stand in a vital relation to the type of character that Jesus would build up in men. He constantly affirmed that the life of a man should be rooted in the love of God. But what sort of a God is he thinking of, who thus lays claim on the devotion of men and women here on earth? The reasonableness of Jesus' insistence depends altogether on the character of the One to whom, he says, men should give a filial loyalty. And these simple stories in Luke are a revelation of the appealing truth, almost past believing in its gladness for humanity, that God is like that father of the wastrel son, thinking of him and yearning after him in his shame and disobedience; so that when the boy turned again home, the father ran and fell on his neck and kissed him and royally forgave. Our whole life is to be spent in the presence of such a God as that. Every day his love is our possession, and every day we face his compassionate sympathy for men and women at our side.

Such a faith as that must needs have a tremendous reaction on character, through every day of living.

Second Week, Fifth Day

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.—I John 4: 7-11.

We cannot leave this phase of our subject without considering the bearing on it of Jesus' own life and death. In some respects this is the most important element in his ethical and social message, because it is the most dynamic. And only a certain subtle form of cowardice could lead us to leave it out of sight for fear of clinging doctrines. What he was and did has a moral significance and power for character-building quite above any sermon he ever preached or any illuminating story he told.

He has left on men's minds the inextinguishable conviction that he was himself the revelation of the character of God. His graciousness with men, his sympathy for their needs and sorrows, his love for the common people, his self-sacrifice to the uttermost limit, all express the loving-kindness of his Father, whose will he did. So that if we believe in Jesus as a teacher, we cannot think of God apart from the story of his life. And it is inevitable that till the end of time, and through all the ebb and flow of theological discussion, the mystery of his death should most hold men's attention, because of the amazing comfort of what it reveals of God—namely, that God loves men even to the point of suffering with their sorrow. The whole *motif* of Jesus' program for human life is love, and the early friends of Jesus felt, and said, that only as they came to understand Jesus' death did they know what love meant.

This may be beyond our present interest and understand-

ing. If so, let it wait to find its own place as the years pass and life unrolls its meaning.

Second Week, Sixth Day

Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel.—Mark 1: 14, 15.

And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.—Luke 5: 30-32.

There is one command of Jesus that seems logically to precede even the great invitation we have been considering. There is no doubt as to what command he laid first on him who would build a life that should be imperishable. It stood in the forefront of his earliest message, "Repent ye and believe in the gospel." It lay behind his teaching all along, and among his last words to his friends was the bidding that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations.

Break with your past, so far as it is evil. It is the first test of genuineness in all religion. Open wide the way of return to God. Face around squarely toward him. All discussion of social or ethical duties is futile if one is consciously holding on to some element of disobedience to God's will. If enough light has broken in on us to show that we are doing wrong, first get right with God, so Jesus says, before inquiring curiously where further light will lead. Honesty involves repentance as the first step toward character, for men or nations.

We should lose the effect of this message if we did not couple it, as Jesus did, with belief in the glad tidings. John preached a repentance based on fear of judgment. Jesus preached a repentance in joy at the good news. Because God's kingdom was at hand, because his love gave assurance of a new day of moral triumph for men, they were to turn their backs on the old disappointing past.

Second Week, Seventh Day

And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchæus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.—Luke 19: 1-10.

Jesus spent a single night at the home of a rich grafter who had never even seen him before that day. We do not know what passed between them or how late into the night they talked. Coming as his friendly guest, it is doubtful if Jesus exposed his sins or urged repentance. It was not necessary. In the morning, Zacchæus stood before Jesus as they said good-by, and heroically took on him the strange yoke of Christian love. The shameful past, whose avarice and selfishness had become to him a second nature, he utterly forsook. He turned about so completely that in his own town he must have been a nine days' wonder. And so, repenting, he found the heavenly way wide open for him who had long been a wastrel and a slacker.

And this is the influence that radiates from Jesus Christ wherever he is present—a suggestion, an invitation, a compelling attraction, to repentance. One may widely discuss his person and his message without feeling it; but one cannot spend even a few hours, like Zacchæus, in his actual company, without shame that he is not better than he is, and a true longing to draw nearer God. It is something far deeper than a command—it is at once a divine compulsion and a divine energy.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Many a country lad left his home to follow the lure of the sea, in the old days of sailing ships, thinking that all that was needed to make him as good a sailor as the best was to know his ship and her rigging and her behavior, and how to handle her skilfully in all sorts of weather—only to discover very soon that he could never make a master mariner without a knowledge of the heavens, too, and of the distant constellations of the night, and of the use of logarithms, so as to be able to calculate his position from the sun and stars, and thus be able to find his way across the world. No conceivable mastery of the technique of the ship could make him a good seaman without the higher knowledge of navigation, to enable him to put his seamanship to useful purpose.

There are many in our day who would gladly take over the ethics of Jesus without his religion. The one seems to be within their reach, the other they are doubtful about. They covet his friendliness and sympathy with men, his truth and strength and courage, in its beauty and perfection. They would willingly take him as their example. But we no sooner come to any honest attempt to imitate Jesus Christ than we discover that we must begin further back than with his outward acts—that his life and teaching are inseparable from those deep-seated religious convictions that made him what he was. His ethics are so interwoven with his religion that you simply cannot have one without the other.

The very atmosphere in which he lived and moved was that of the encompassing presence of God. The strength and gladness of it colored all his thought and speech and action. The reflected peace and kindness of his Father's love shone unmistakably in all his relations with men and women. He was not carrying out a scheme of social uplift, there in Galilee; he was living out the spirit of the Father of the household, whom he knew so well. His life faced toward God every day, as a flower faces toward the sun. And one could as easily get the fragrance and color of a rose without the sunlight as reproduce the beauty of Jesus' character without the simple faith in Almighty Love from which

it sprang. If Jesus had one day trusted in his Father's guidance, and the next had wondered whether there could be any personal God behind this sorry scheme of things, he never would have been a helper of distressed men, or a clear light for unnumbered generations groping in the dark.

It is futile to talk about obeying the words of Jesus, or following his leadership, unless we place at the beginning the first and great commandment, as he did. No other treatment of his commands is either honest or intelligent. We may be in a hurry to get at the actual technique of social service; but there is no shorter way to follow him in this than the one that he so clearly indicated. Clubs for ethical or social culture one may join without having any definite views as to the nature of God; one may even insist that the latter are quite unnecessary. But we cannot go two steps in honest obedience to Jesus Christ without perceiving that our attitude toward God is of the very essence of our discipleship. He leaves us in no doubt that we are building all our life on the sand, if we turn away from his first and constant insistence upon loving trust in the eternal Righteousness, who, as our Father, has made us for himself.

If we cannot follow Jesus at this point, then, for the deeper issues of life, we must follow some other leader. Herbert Spencer, for example, would spare us this embarrassment. If we could drink from him the inspiration and moral power to make us what we want to be, then we could go on with our character-building free from concern as to any Heavenly Father, or our duties to Him. But as a river of living water, Herbert Spencer bids fair to run out rather quickly among the sands. Jesus continues, a river of life for human society. But his social message, like his personal life, is inseparable from this confidence in God. Rock-built character starts further back and lower down than any generous impulse to benevolence.

II

This conviction of Jesus, rooted in his own experience, is reflected in the command which he lays first of all on men, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." We are so familiar with it that it is hard for us to realize how unapproachably unique it is among all the commands that have been given

to men. In reality it is hardly so much a command as a title-deed and a glorious credential for mankind—a credential of divine heredity. Manifestly it knits up humanity with God. Fixed as we are here on earth among material conditions, with our close relation to a material environment written in our very bodies, this ancient word from God sounds on from age to age, proclaiming the majesty of our spirits and giving the lie to all the forces of earthliness and pessimism that would claim men for any lesser estate. It claims us as God's own. Nothing of human limitation or failure can dim the glory of its promise.

The great law-givers of the nations—like Buddha or Confucius or Muhammad—were content for the most part to exact obedience from their followers. They do not ask for love. Only one asks for that, and Jesus called him our Father. We recognize at once that if he asks for love it must be because he loves, and therefore craves response, as does our poor human fatherhood. It is only his fatherly heart that makes our true affection of consequence to him. The gods of Greece and Rome and of our own forefathers did not ask for such a thing as that. Love is, so to speak, a family matter, and Zeus and Thor were separated from their worshipers by an abyss; unknown and awful, they laid on men their commands, but asked no nearer intimacy.

But Jesus declared that God so thinks of us that, first of all, he asks us for our love. Surely he does not do it, as some theologies have suggested, to mock us with our depravity and abject inability to respond; but only because we are able to yield what gives him joy. Men may despise themselves or cynically condemn their fellows, but there is not one so low that God does not invite him to this transcendent fellowship. This very command, that Jesus kept in the forefront of life's obligations, declares everlastingly what value God sets upon us, and what kinship of spirit he recognizes even among the most depraved. It makes it impossible for us to think cheaply of ourselves or to despise the poor and ignorant. It binds us all up together in a family of divine lineage. We may think out the implications of it very slowly or imperfectly, but the command itself is like a shaft of sunlight falling in a dark place. And the dullest man can see how character-building is a different thing

if it starts with the inspiration of a royal summons such as this.

III

It is a fair thing to ask whether there is, in prosaic fact, any real content to this mysterious duty of loving an Unseen Spirit. Apart from the common duties of life to the people of flesh and blood about us, is there a "something more" that God asks for, as if due directly to himself? We like to think that we can best show our reverence for any unknown Spirit of Good by a life of honor and truth and justice toward our fellows; and that perhaps it is unnecessary, beyond this, to make exacting demands on faith, as though he expected of us something more than fidelity to the duties well within our understanding. Life would certainly be simpler if it needed to take no note of any demands upon it beyond those we can see and measure and understand with our physical senses.

But the answer is that we simply cannot narrow life to these dimensions. Men have never been able to do it, and are not able to do it now. Even savage races have the idea of this "something more" that is expected of them if all is to go well. And when we come to the experience and example of Jesus, an unmistakable master in the things of the spirit, we cannot begin to consider him without having this element in his life thrust on our attention. The unseen Spirit whom he called his Father played at least as active a part in his life as did Peter, or any of his daily companions. There seems to have been a constant reciprocity of thought and feeling between them. Jesus gave to him his confidence, obedience, affection, and received from him direction and assistance, besides the sympathy and cheer that made him the joyful man he was. From one point of view, Jesus' whole life seems to have been given to his self-forgetful ministry to the needs of men and women about him. He lived in others and in the duties of here and now. And yet it is equally certain that the whole outflow of his generous activity was fed by this inner fountain of a divine, affectionate intimacy that never faltered.

This very element, that made his life the marvel that it was, he declares should be the controlling element in the

life of every man. And if there is such a God and Father as he believed, we cannot escape the same conclusion. We have an unescapable duty of conscious filial fellowship with him. God has made us for himself, so Jesus said. He wants us—wants our confidence, our obedience, our affection—wants our spiritual fellowship. And so Jesus urged men to draw closer to God; urged them to talk with him: to talk with him freely of their lives—of their needs and ambitions, even of their shameful failures. He tried to bring them into a relation of happy and trustful association with God, as of a son with a father, so that the powerful influence of that high and holy Spirit might penetrate them through and through. He wanted them to forget themselves in loving service to their fellowmen. Assuredly so! But he wanted them to achieve this through their being rooted and grounded in love themselves, as they lived each day in the enjoyment of God's goodness.

It is a weary business, sometimes, to walk by faith. But can you see any way to avoid it if one is to be what Jesus wanted men to be? If we are to achieve what he said was possible for men, then every day we have need to walk consciously with our Father as well as with our fellowmen. We are not to wait till this life is through before we begin the intimacies of the eternal life. Here and now we are to be in living touch with the Almighty.

One is reluctantly obliged to admit that this acquaintance and fellowship are not for the most part what we would have them. Let us frankly admit that our limitations are painfully oppressive. We would like to have such an ecstatic and overwhelmingly convincing experience of God as would make him the chief object in our field of consciousness, reassuring us once for all, and relieving us of the lifelong struggle for faith in so contrary a world as this. But most of us are not religious geniuses, like Paul, and some of us are the very opposite of mystical, both by temperament and training. And even Paul said that now we know in part, and at best see darkly as in a mirror.

We shall always have to make the effort of attention and spiritual concentration in order to realize our Father's love or to talk with him, as it were face to face. We shall always have to fight a good fight of faith for this divine

reenforcement of character, and our daily attainments and experiences in this field, taken one by one, may seem to us humiliatingly small and insignificant. Yet in the long run, year after year, they serve to bind us up with God in thought and purpose and—at the long last—in character. Never yet was there a great saint who was satisfied with his attainments in this heavenly intimacy of the child with the heavenly Father. And yet it is the sublimest element in the life of the soul, and of an infinite potency. As Edwin Markham has expressed it in one of his later poems:

"The builder who first bridged Niagara's gorge,
Before he swung his cable, shore to shore,
Sent out across the gulf his venturing kite
Bearing a slender cord for unseen hands
To grasp upon the further cliff and draw
A greater cord, and then a greater yet;
Till at the last across the chasm swung
The cable—then the mighty bridge in air!

So we may send our little timid thought
Across the void, out to God's reaching hands—
Send out our love and faith to thread the deep—
Thought after thought until the little cord
Has greatened to a chain no chance can break,
And—we are anchored to the Infinite!"

CHAPTER III

Facing toward Man

DAILY READINGS

Third Week, First Day

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.—Matt. 22: 39.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.—I Cor. 13: 1-3.

It is not strange that the real religion of Jesus Christ has never been popular. It is too costly—it requires too much of human nature. It needs to be ingeniously shaded off into something less exacting if it is to have much success as a popular faith or a state creed. The constructive principle of all character building under Jesus Christ is love—love both for our Father and for all the Father's children. And love, as we all know, is not easy to come by. It cannot be pumped up mechanically to meet the demand, as can any kind of religiosity or compliance with external requirements. A man can be a fanatic in religion and yet wholly fail to know what love is.

Jesus said, over and over again, that the very warp and woof of a right life was kindness to one's neighbor. It must be the outstanding, unmistakable note of a Christian life or a Christian church, of Christian society or a Christian state. Worship and creed and sacraments have their place, and often they have quite filled the thought of religious leaders. But we are compelled to see, when we get close

to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, that love comes first of all.

We can only notice here that Jesus calls for this unselfish affection toward God and man alike, without a thought of separation between the two obligations. The social side of religion can never be lost sight of by a real disciple of Jesus. One might as well claim to love his father and mother truly, and yet despise his brothers and sisters in whose welfare his parents are wrapped up. All the long education of the ages, so Jesus said, was summed up in this attitude of soul, toward the God whom we have never seen and the men and women whom we know so well.

Third Week, Second Day

Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.—Luke 10: 30-37.

So long as men live, this simple story will bind their consciences. Because, for all that it is a story, it declares the will of God as categorically as the ten words of Sinai. Its terrible irony burns like vitriol. Its quiet commendation is like a distinguished service order from God. And yet, though everyone in our day is compelled to applaud it, it is like one of the thoughts of God in its unlikeness to ordinary human behavior. Its purpose is to point out who

our neighbor is whom we are called to love—simply the one who needs our help, the one whom no self-interest draws us on to aid, but who makes claim on us in his trouble just as a brother in God's human family.

It needs a touch of the divine compassion in order to meet this test. We Americans are enjoying our altruism toward the Belgians and Armenians, as evidence of our disinterestedness. But how about our treatment of the Negroes and Indians and Chinese and Mexicans? Have we played the Good Samaritan toward them? This half-murdered Jew in the story was of a race highly distasteful to his benefactor, and yet he had pity on him. Have we a love for our neighbor that actually crosses the border of our tastes and training, and kindles our imagination to the wrongs of people whose interests are by no means parallel to our own? That is what Jesus asks for as the habitual temper of those who would build character on the rock of God's approval.

After all, the parable is not one for an easy popularity, save as we apply it to others rather than ourselves.

Third Week, Third Day

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?—Matt. 16: 24-26.

This command is, so to speak, the converse of the one just under discussion. A Christian must love his neighbor; that means, in practice, that he must forget himself. There is not much room for discussion of the matter. The necessity involved may be distinctly disagreeable, but it is plain as day. If one is to be genuinely concerned for others, it means that his own selfish concerns must retire a little into the background. He must deliberately put himself out of the road as an absorbing interest.

Denying self does not mean, as it has so often been interpreted to mean, making oneself unhappy or miserable. Some of those old Christian ascetics, who slowly tortured them-

selves for years, seem to us to have been supremely self-centered. They were thinking of themselves and their piety above everything else. Jesus insists that his disciples must lose sight of themselves in something else that appeals to them just as much—in his kingdom and his little ones. There is nothing about this that is unnatural or harsh. We are not to impoverish or to afflict ourselves, but to find rich and eager satisfaction in following him in his ministry of love. To be actually in a good fellowship of daily service with that great Friend would be as satisfying in America today as in the Galilee of long ago.

O Lord! teach me this day thy joy of self-forgetfulness in a service of God and man that shall grow more glad and more engrossing year by year.

Third Week, Fourth Day

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.—Luke 6: 31-35.

We all agree that this is a wonderful saying. It reaches to the heart of the social problem in all its Protean forms. A man who really shaped his character on these lines would be a singularly pleasant neighbor, and a whole community of such people would be almost too ideally agreeable for belief. And yet, for most people, the Golden Rule is a little like the multiplication table—its truth is cheerfully conceded, but it is too familiar to be interesting, and it has pretty well ceased to be stimulating to the imagination.

Jesus, however, lays it down as one of the formative principles of character, and as such it takes daily issue with our indolent preoccupation with our own interests. If we let our imagination work upon it even for a few moments,

it becomes almost unpleasantly suggestive. Most of us get along with it peaceably as Christians, only by taking it for granted as a truism. But as soon as we begin in an emergency to act on Charles Reade's motto, "Put yourself in his place," and try to obey the word of Jesus from that enlightened viewpoint, we find it of an extraordinary freshness, disturbingly fruitful in suggestion. It is the revelation of one of God's thoughts for us, and so it often brings us to confusion by very contrast with our own.

Third Week, Fifth Day

If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.—Matt. 5:23, 24.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel!—Matt. 23:23, 24.

How much in earnest Jesus was in these commands appears from such sayings as the two quoted above. Men have always tended to believe that duties to God were more important than duties to men, that it was more necessary to propitiate him than to be right with one's fellows—somewhat as we all feel that it is better policy to stand in with the strong than with the weak. In all lands the priesthood has at times led the faithful to believe that full tithes to God were a more sacred obligation than full wages to laborers.

Jesus disgusted the religious leaders of his day by affirming the opposite. He declared justice to men to be a first duty to God. Scrupulous religious tithes, without justice and mercy to the poor, he said were a disgrace. The man in the trenches is in sympathy with Jesus when he feels instinctively that a good man is a big-hearted man, and a good pal, and a true friend. If religion gets in the way of one's sympathies with his fellows, something is the matter with the religion.

Jesus plainly says that lack of fair dealing with men will

spoil a man's approach to God. Many a student, unable to find God, thinks that he is held back by doctrinal or philosophical difficulties, when the heart of the trouble is in his wrong or selfish treatment of his neighbor. One cannot cheat a professor—perhaps even a corporation—and yet find God readily in prayer. *Christian character is character that finds an unobstructed way to God in its largehearted fairness to men.*

Third Week, Sixth Day

But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me. —Matt. 25: 31-40.

Of all the sayings of Jesus perhaps none has left a deeper mark on selfish humanity than this. Even though we have been at war, even though a great part of Christendom has seemed to be running amuck against its underlying contention of mercy to the weak, never has its influence been so profoundly felt as at this day. And the new day of reconstruction will draw this headstrong world a little nearer than it has ever been to the thought of the speaker of this parable.

Even though this is what might be called a popular teaching, it is a marvelous revelation of realities undreamed of

by the multitude. If it means anything, it means that our suffering world is all bound up in its interest with the unseen spiritual world. What goes on here is noted there. The sick, the prisoners, the starving, the miserable, are God's little ones. Who ministers to them, ministers to the great Friend of men. Who loves them, is the friend of God. To our natural benevolence it adds this glorious and compelling motive for compassion.

And on the other hand this one word "inasmuch" deepens the guilt of those who, in their march to power, ride down God's little ones. Brutalities against the weak are bad enough, but when, in their wretched persons, one strikes at the Lord of the Kingdom, then even imperialism might well shrink back in dread from ambitions that involve trampling on the poor.

The disciple of Jesus is one who honestly looks to see his Lord's face in the faces of those who by their helplessness mutely plead with us for help.

Third Week, Seventh Day

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.—Luke 4: 16-21.

We should fail to get the full effect of these commands of Jesus, did we not reenforce them by the lesson and example of his life. After all, we must surely understand

by what he himself did and was, what he would have us do and be. And it is a perpetual refreshment to noble living to remember what use Jesus made of his few years among men. In the verses quoted above, he tells us what life meant for him—for a young man in the full flush of health, with popularity and influence opening before him. He was not thinking how to squeeze life's orange of its last drop of satisfaction for himself. He was not thinking of himself at all—he was forgetting himself as he bids us do—but he was completely mastered by his sympathy for his brothers and sisters, not for the care-free and rich, but for the poor and ignorant and oppressed, whose cry went up before God as the endless cry of an unknown multitude goes up today in sorrow. Life, to his generous soul, meant the chance to help and save. And he spent himself, to the utmost limit, to bring men home to God and to God's peace. So his life reenforced his words. It utterly overflowed them and surpassed them. It made forever plain as the sun what his religion was and of what character his followers must be.

He who would build upon the rock must somehow find the way to deny himself and, like his Master, live in the open sunlight of love to God and men.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

What a place this world of men would be by now if the Christian Church had always kept within sight of Jesus' primary requirement of his disciples! We may talk as much as we will of the beauty and simplicity of the Galilean Gospel, but, when it comes to actual living, there is something in human nature that makes it edge away in practice from the Sermon on the Mount, and prefer almost any substitute for the searching demands for love to God and man. Sentimentally or theoretically they are very agreeable to contemplate, and men willingly approve them; but they go right to the heart of human deficiency and weakness, and expose our need of a divine cooperation if we are to obey them successfully.

Apparently, in the past, men have preferred any degree of complexity or difficulty or dogmatic severity in their

religion, to this simple summing up of its essential meaning. Indeed, as we look at church history, that touching saying of Jesus the night before his death, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," seems like a biting sarcasm. And in spite of every fear or disappointment that men may feel about the Church of today, there is reason for inexpressible gratitude and encouragement that we are giving heed as never before to this insistent central teaching of our Lord and Master. We do not need to try to be more spiritual or more profound than he was himself, and we cannot go far wrong if we daily keep in sight of the example and spirit of his life. No doubt we shall suffer many limitations from our ignorance and our dull blundering grasp on great truths, but we shall at least be saved from that fatal betrayal of his cause which is written all too plainly across centuries of ecclesiastical history.

It may free us from the vagueness of mere suspicion in this matter, and from uncertainty as to the justice of such reflection on the past, if we look intently for a moment at the actually prevailing standards of character in the Christian Church at a far-off time that yet resembled the present, when civilization was actually threatened by Goth and Hun and when the Church's constructive and resistant power needed to be at its highest. Take the latter half of the fourth century, when the early Church was still fresh and strong—as we suppose—and had not had time to outgrow the cleansing fires of three hundred years of persecution.

It is, of course, difficult to get a fair insight into the actual thought and life of the time. But we can at least get a true picture of the conditions prevailing in the organized church from the full biographies and letters and writings of the six great religious leaders of that period—Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine in the west, and Basil, Gregory, and Chrysostom in the east. They show at least in faithful detail what church life meant to them in their associations with their fellow-clergy. Only one word can sum up what it meant, and that is, strife—not strife with the heathen, or with the civil power, but with their fellow-Christians; not strife that was wholesome or constructive, but strife bitter and destructive and often venomous. They were

good men, but their lives were one long battle against envy, slander, and abuse, against bribery and violence and bloodshed, at the hands of their fellow-leaders of the Church. As Basil wrote pathetically, after one of his journeys among the clergy of the Eastern churches, "Each is more eager about his own wrath than his own salvation; each aims his sting against his neighbor."

Doctrinal discussion in the search for heresy was the chief intellectual occupation of the age, and in it truth and decency were largely flung to the winds. The ferocity of much of the discussion is what most impresses one. As Jerome wrote, for example, of an ambiguous saying of Origen's that could be taken to imply an inequality between Father and Son, "If I had heard my father or mother saying those things against Christ, I would have torn their blaspheming mouths like those of a mad dog." For him, it was only necessary that a writer should diverge ever so slightly from what he deemed the orthodox philosophy to be thereafter a "scorpion" or a "slimy serpent."

If this was true of the great leaders, it can be imagined what were the excesses of the fanatical and ignorant monks. It was not necessary that the subject of the quarrels should concern the central truths of the faith. One heresy, that of the Donatists, that lasted a hundred years and embittered and repeatedly endangered the life of Augustine, had to do only with a matter of church order; and yet the violence was such that one party, the Circumcelliones, not content with wholesale bloodshed, used to destroy the eyesight of its antagonists by rubbing out their eyes with chalk and vinegar.

It is not strange that superstitions drifted in to fill the place of the homely simplicity of Jesus' message. The worship of angels, saints, and martyrs, became universal; bones and ashes and relics were held of priceless value to draw worshipers to shrines and chapels; and the ascetic life of the celibate came to be the refuge of those who sought to escape the evil of the world around them, until one is fairly bewildered by the forgetfulness of the real Jesus and his teachings shown by those who were his accredited representatives and who yet parted from his leadership at every turn.

With all our failings of today, we have yet come a vast distance since that time. How unthinkable in those days of self-will and passion would have been such an ecumenical church council as was held a few years ago at Edinburgh to consider foreign missions, where men like John R. Mott, Robert E. Speer, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and Professor Cairns were the leaders, and where the spirit of mutual regard, the spirit of Christian love, was in control. But the advance, so far as there has been advance, has been in the demand for reality in Christian character, for actual fidelity to those teachings of Jesus that even a plain man may understand without subtle formulation by learned theologians.

Unquestionably there was, more or less out of sight through all these years, the "remnant" of true disciples, as in Central Europe today, who walked humbly in faith and love, and who kept alive the continuity of the true brotherhood. But the spectacle of the visible Church is too largely that of a grim travesty on the real teaching and example of Jesus Christ, calling as that does for brotherly kindness and unselfishness first of all.

The colossal work of the great Christian organizations in camp and field and prison has been an object lesson in the religion of Jesus—in divine love ministering to the needs of men. It has brought Jesus Christ more intelligibly near to humanity and has visibly interpreted his Gospel. When one contrasts this war of the Allies with the so-called holy wars of the Crusades, that moved on amid an ever-present and all-encompassing environment of debauchery and cruelty and dishonor, we recognize with humble gratitude that the Spirit of God has led his Church very far since that time, in understanding what Jesus wanted of men and what it is to believe in him. The oft-repeated declaration, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" has sunk deep into the hearts of his followers since those days of callous inhumanity. And for this we may well thank God and take courage.

II

It is a strange thing that out of a religion so elaborately sacerdotal and legalistic as Judaism, should have come a teaching so homely and unconventional as this insistence of

Jesus on the supreme duty of good will to men. Anybody can be kind, whereas the world has always recognized that it requires severe training and great natural gifts to be an adept in religion. If we take the second commandment and the Golden Rule, and put beside them Jesus' picture of the Last Judgment, we have an unanswerable presentation of the supreme demand made by Christianity for sympathetic kindness in all human relations. It is obvious at a glance that Jesus would make it the most distinctive trait in the character of his disciples, and that, just in proportion as one is a follower of Jesus, he is bound to be a man of deep human sympathies. It is not enough to be a man of clean life, honorable reputation, and reverent spirit—or even of correct views. There have been many such who in social relations were cold as ice, and who simply were not interested in common people. If one is to hear the words of Jesus and do them, there must needs be a spring of love in his heart that will make him a friend of men and a helper of those in trouble.

Nothing could display this teaching more emphatically than the Parable of the Last Judgment. The basis of its awards is one of astonishing simplicity—nothing more nor less than men's treatment of their fellows. Jesus evidently saw in this the deep element of kinship of spirit with God, by faith and love. But outwardly it looked merely like common kindness. The decisive consideration was the way they had carried themselves to very humble and even socially objectionable people—men in poor clothes, women in trouble, people under a cloud, at whom ordinary folk simply stare coldly. Good Jews would have felt it reasonable, at such a time of stern inquiry as the judgment, to examine closely into one's habits—whether one was a lover of the law; whether he was scrupulous about the Sabbath; whether he was a regular attendant at the synagogue, made his temple offerings frequently, and was obedient to the priest; or, as a loyal Jew, was an orthodox adherent of Jehovah and a hater of all Gentile ways. But to discard the whole field of such religious duties for an inquiry into one's relations with beggars and prisoners and the common rabble, this was a mere trap for the righteous, whose religious duties left them little time or patience for wasting on the masses.

It must have been bad enough in their thought that he who called himself the great rabbi, the preacher of the people, was himself a sort of vagrant philanthropist, with no school like Hillel or Gamaliel, with no dignified seclusion or reserve, and without an edifying show of piety or learning; merely one who went about doing good, with sick, and cripples, and women and children, and tax-collectors, and a crowd of the unwashed, ever following him about and making demands upon his time. A man who was teacher and saint and prophet should have had more self-respect than to be at the beck and call of the rabble, healing their sick and casting out demons like a common hireling doctor or exorcist. All this was humiliating enough. But to set up these undignified habits as a test of piety for faithful Jews, for the guides and leaders of the people—this was deplorable. Even to the disciples, this picture drawn by Jesus must have seemed to confuse religious values in a hopeless tangle of perplexities.

But to us today the simplicity and winsomeness of his thought grows ever more clear and more convincing. We seem to see quite clearly what Jesus meant by that last test of worthiness—not "dead works," nor dead faith, nor any other dead or useless thing whatever; but a living participation in his own spirit, so much of a share in his life-spirit as to have a share in his life-work. His life-work was loving helpfulness, bringing an infinite compassion to bear on human sin and need and sorrow. And those who were with him in this life-purpose, ministers to their brothers' need—for all their imperfections, these were the sheep who stood on his right hand. This is the perfect fruit of the religion of Jesus.

III

It is the fruit of a deeply rooted life. At this point the close interrelation of the first and second commandments of Jesus should claim our attention for a moment more. One of our present-day poets has very cleverly said, with a certain inviting speciousness, "If every man loved his neighbor as himself, this world would be a paradise; and for me this purpose is all the creed and all the religion that I want." It needs only a moment of reflection to perceive the thoughtlessness of such an utterance. In any large city of Christen-

dom you could gather quickly a thousand men and women who, if they were to love and treat one as they love and treat themselves, would treat him with such injurious folly as would presently draw him body and soul to destruction. Why? Because so many men are themselves the prey of dark forces; they are the sport of evil tastes and habits; they are mastered by avarice or passion; their will is warped clear away from righteousness, and in their highest faculties they are like men crippled or blinded.

This is the problem that Jesus faced—how to bring back to God a society full of men and women in such radical distress and need as this. The philosophy that would make life a paradise by persuading all to love their neighbor as themselves, and *going no further* in relief of life's thousand ills, is a philosophy for those blind and deaf to all the long tragedy of human travail. To say nothing of our need, at times, of infinitely more than any neighbor can do for us, both love of self and love of man have first to be made wise and right, or they will still make earth a place of misery.

The command to love God comes first by an obvious necessity. It calls a man first to know himself and honor himself and learn to love himself, in purity and self-mastery and righteousness, as one whom God loves, and so, living as a son of God, to love his neighbor as himself. Such a love for one's neighbor, informed and enriched by the good will of our Father, would indeed go far to make this world a comfortable home. But here is a task that, the more one reflects upon it, opens up vistas of far-reaching need that quite outrun the powers of the best of human character to overtake. Would it were true that "just the art of being kind is all this poor world needs"! But most of us get out into the stream of life only a little way before we discover that we are pitifully unequal to cope with the situation by anything our utmost good will can do, and that some force is needed more deeply redemptive and reconstructive than even the law of the Golden Rule. Jesus thought so. His life and death made luminous to men what force he thought this was—even the living energy of God's love. And he calls men to commend it, by their witness of victorious living, to all God's sons and daughters.

CHAPTER IV

The Demand for Genuineness

DAILY READINGS

Fourth Week, First Day

Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts;
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.—Psalm 139: 23, 24.

Sanctimonious cant and pious humbug have always been associated with religion. But they cannot be associated with the real discipleship of Jesus, because his presence dissipates them as a strong north wind scatters the fog. If he were with us we should feel instantly the force of his whole personality, challenging candor and honesty on our part in answer to his own straightforward manhood.

One of the first elements of character on which he insists is genuineness. A true man must be of a limpid sincerity, toward God as well as toward his fellows. He must be honest before all—the inward and the outward agreeing. Unreality in religion is odious alike to God and man.

Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.—Matt. 6: 1-4.

If it were one of us who was speaking on the subject of genuineness in religion, we would not begin with the matter of giving money. Perhaps some of us would not have much to talk about if character were to be appraised from that angle. But the Jews had a somewhat wooden division of righteousness into three parts—almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. He who attended to these three great duties was the conventionally righteous man. Jesus followed this classification. It would let in the light upon his theme as well as any other.

The arresting thought for us in this passage is that Jesus so evidently regards the prosaic matter of the way in which we spend a few dollars as a sacred engagement between ourselves and God. He is concerned in it. It depends not so much on what the public asks of us, or on what the Church expects, but on the reality of our filial relation with our Father. If we are like him in spirit, or want to be like him, we simply cannot help sharing some of our good things with those less fortunate than we. It is a spontaneous expression of love, both for him and his. He sees and notes it, as he notes every such offering of grateful love. We are gladdened by his response, in which there cannot fail to be a blessing. This is the reward of which Jesus speaks. But if we use our benevolence, as the Pharisees did, to gain the applause of men, then we stand exposed as playing to the gallery. We are play-actors, that is, hypocrites—appearing to serve God, but really seeking to serve ourselves. We are caught in the net of unreality; we are building on sand.

Fourth Week, Second Day

And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee. And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.—Matt. 6: 5-8.

Later on we shall be considering Jesus' views as to the place of prayer in the building of character. At this time we only need to note the plain reasonableness of his demand for an intense simplicity and reality about it. If it means anything at all, it means the transcendent converse of our spirits with the Spirit of God. A thousand forces are hurrying us along the stream of purely material interests in our crowded daily life—suddenly, we stand still in the midflow of these physical preoccupations and reach out into the unseen eternity for God. He may be closer at hand than the sights and sounds that fill our eyes and ears, but he is in a great silence, in another thought-world than that of this rush of human striving in which we live.

It is wonderful and beautiful beyond words, that we should be able in an instant's turning of the mind to talk thus with our Father who inhabits eternity. But, Jesus says, to do this we must concentrate attention—we must withdraw ourselves from the confusion of the crowd and the clamor of sense-appeals, and give ourselves intently to the sacred business of the moment. *To use prayer as a show, or as a means of acquiring merit, or a mere form of outward worship, or as anything but what it is—the simple, sublime converse of a child with his Father—is to part company with reality and play with an illusion.*

Fourth Week, Third Day

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.—Matt. 7: 1-5.

This is another type of unsoundness of character, against which Jesus is severe. Some of us might hardly agree with him, at first thought, because the world counts it distinctly clever to have a sharp critical faculty, keen at dissecting other people's foibles and follies. It not only gives a piquancy

to one's own conversation, but carries the agreeable suggestion that the critic himself is wiser or better than those he exposes. But to Jesus, this quality of character, complacent and excusing toward itself but ungenerously severe toward others, is contemptible because blundering and self-deceived. We do well to shun carefully a habit that, in the eyes of the Master, was a peril to noble living.

In the famous dedication to the Life of Charles Kingsley, he is spoken of as "Stern to all forms of wrong and oppression, yet most stern to himself." Obviously no man can be true to the interests of society or church or state and not at times speak out what he believes to be the truth as to the wrongdoings or deficiencies of others. A Christian man who abdicates all exercise of the critical faculty is a poor fighter for any worthy cause and a grievous irritation to his friends. But if he is a disciple of Jesus he will be genuinely honest, in that he judges himself first and most severely, and judges others only reluctantly and with generosity, as he would himself be judged.

Fourth Week, Fourth Day

Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire.—Matt. 5: 21, 22.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.—Eph. 4: 31, 32.

Here is a sidelight upon Jesus' idea of what the brotherly spirit really demands of men. It is not enough to make professions of sympathy or good will, or to refrain from actual violence towards the one who offends us. Jesus makes it plain that he who searches the heart will be content with nothing less than a persevering, brotherly good will toward our neighbor, even under provocation. How could it be

otherwise, if we are all God's children? He forbids not only open violence, but the bitterness and rancor of spirit that flames out in contemptuous or savage language. To have one's heart defiled with hatred, made bitter and evil by harbored ill will, carries with it an inevitable and painful retribution. It shuts one out from God. The sight of a follower of Jesus trying to find words bitter and cruel enough to express his hate, is something monstrous in its incongruity. It is a perilous thing to throw the reins on the neck of one's passion, even against an unscrupulous enemy, and to search for every venomous and stinging word that we can bring against him. However it may affect him, it injures us. It reacts against the very element in character that is most divine—the spirit of our Lord's gentleness and compassion, that refuses to be blasted, even by human wickedness.

Fourth Week, Fifth Day

Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.—Matt. 5: 33-37.

It is a curious thing that the ideal of a perfectly truthful life should have been given us by an Oriental. The difficulties of administering justice in the courts anywhere in the Far East, even until today, are an amazement to the Anglo-Saxon, because his moral inheritance does not enable him to imagine what complete indifference to the truth may mean. But Jesus grew up amid the endless deceits and trickeries of Asiatic village life. And from him came our vision of knightly honor—of the word of a gentleman, true as steel.

The Church has known endless tergiversation and disingenuousness, until men have sometimes looked with suspicion on an ecclesiastic just because of his religious training. But the man who builds his character after the Master's

pattern has always been a man of high honor, churchman or not. How could he be anything else, while daily inviting that divine scrutiny? Many of us love to remember the exclamation of Livingstone's, written in peril of death that night on the bank of the River Loangwa, when he steeled himself to courage by a promise of Jesus, "It is the word of a gentleman of the most sacred and strictest honor, and there is an end on't." Jesus would have his disciples like himself, sensitive to truth, hating a lie; not needing to bolster up with oaths their affirmations, as the custom was and is, but so transparently genuine that God and man alike would know they meant what they said.

Fourth Week, Sixth Day

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.—Matt. 5: 13-16.

All of us like praise. At the same time we do not like so much praise as to put us in the uncomfortable position of being too highly estimated and so having too much expected of us. Perhaps a Pharisee would have taken these words of Jesus with serene relish. But we are not Pharisees. We are rather inclined to deprecate such strong language as applied to ourselves. On the whole we would a great deal prefer not to be called the salt of the earth or the light of the world. We would rather move in a modest twilight of amateur effort, that cannot commit us to anything very formidable in the way of expectations.

But Jesus' idea of Christian character leaves no room for such enervating modesty. He gives it the full spur and tonic of a divine order of merit. He was under no illusion as to the moral perfection of those rough, undisciplined men to whom he spoke. Well he knew that they were no saints. But he knew the direction of their life-choice, he understood

the brave venture of their faith, and as one who knew human society and all its needs he said unhesitatingly, "Ye are the salt of the earth." If they were genuine, they must needs be that. If they were honestly his disciples, they would prove to be the light of the world.

He disapproves our nebulous land of half-lights and compromise, where we can walk by easy-going standards. If we are honest we must stand out in the open, men of confessed faith and obedience toward God; and then some, at least, will be grateful to God that we have lived.

No service we can render society will be more gratefully received than this, that we should make it a little easier for men to believe in God.

Fourth Week, Seventh Day

And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashen, hands. . . . And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands? And he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

This people honoreth me with their lips,
But their heart is far from me.

. . . And he called to him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear me all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man.—Mark 7: 1, 2, 5, 6, 14, 15.

To the average man in the street today these words would seem ordinary common sense, so obvious is their truth. But they were dangerous words in the thought of the best men of Jesus' time, and marked him as a revolutionary as surely as if he had been a soap-box orator declaiming against society. All the nice discriminations of manner and custom that marked off religious people from the non-religious, slowly built up through the centuries, he seemed to set at nought. If love was the fulfilling of the law, if only the inner state

of the heart was what God considered, what was the use of the thousand and one enactments and prohibitions of law and tradition, that hedged off the pious few from the ignorant, unclean masses of the people and the Gentiles? One only needed to ask the question to show how ridiculous the contention of Jesus was, so they thought.

And yet today Jesus' way of judging moral values has become a commonplace. That is, it is coming to be a commonplace; for the old dependence on pious externalities, with no touch of love and service about them, has a strong grip on many of us yet. If we, coming from Christian homes, live orderly decent lives, fairly correct and even religious, by sheer force of training and habit, we are likely to think it makes us all right with God. Outwardly, we put up a pretty good front; no one could find much fault with our lives. But God looketh upon the heart! What are its tastes and thoughts and desires? Is it love that lies deepest, keeping us humble and grateful and eager to help, or is it self-love and self-will?

To follow Jesus is to have this demand for genuine loyalty to his spirit pressed home with fresh insistence every day, until little by little it begins to tell.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Surely there was never a religious teacher who laid such stress on reality as Jesus. He was no dreamy-eyed mystic, gazing ecstatically on a far-off heavenly world of saints and angels. He was building a new kingdom out of the stuff that lay just ready to his hand—men and women with all the faults and limitations of society at that Syrian level. They delighted in religion, like all Semitic peoples. But they had little use for stern self-restraint for altruistic ends. They much preferred the old-time sacrifices of the temple worship.

How well Jesus understood them—he who had grown up as one of them! But he refused to draw any dividing line between religion and the everyday moralities of the home and market. To do the will of God was his religion, and it was his ideal of character, as well. Both have to do with

the unseen God who searcheth the hearts, yet both work out openly in the commonplace social relations of daily living; so that all pretense or make-believe or pious camouflage of any description are wholly useless, and actively hurtful because they blind the eye of the soul. Unless a man is genuinely in earnest, he will make a sorry figure as a professed follower of such a Teacher.

This being so, one would suppose that the Church of Jesus' disciples would have been, through all the years, scrupulously earnest in its insistence on a genuine heart-loyalty to his ideals. It is a shocking thing to realize that through a large part of so-called Christendom until today, just the opposite is true. Unreality and formal make-believe and callous indifference to social obligations are rampant, just as they were among the men who listened so angrily to Jesus when he spoke the words.

One might almost be inclined to think, at first, that the readings for this week, illustrating Jesus' demand for genuineness, were hardly necessary for our generation. They are like truisms. One might take them for granted, so deeply have they entered into the moral perception of our time. But they are anything but truisms. One cannot consider them too deeply, or take home their lesson too earnestly and humbly. It is just because learned men have outwardly approved but inwardly rejected them that our world has been passing through an agony of distress and bloodshed, now in our time.

It would be well if everyone could read a book like Franck's "Vagabonding through the Andes." It is a singularly entertaining record of travel, but its value for our purpose lies in its endless series of vivid word pictures, accurate as a photograph, of the unconscious but appalling chasm between religion and reality among the masses in those Andean countries. Fanatically attached to Christianity as they know it, living always within sound of clangorous church-bells, they yet see no incongruity either for priest or people between that profession and the actual practice of lying, drunkenness, immorality, and kindred vices. They live and move and have their being in the midst of a great illusion, namely, that they are Christian.

Nor can we utterly disclaim the presence, even among our

strictest reformed churches, of a similar lack of reality in estimating moral values, especially in relation to our Master's demand for love. Even in clear-thinking Scotland, not so many years ago, a man might be a harsh father and an avaricious neighbor without injury to his church standing, when a breach of Sabbath decorum or an openly expressed doubt as to a doctrine in the Confession would have subjected him to immediate censure and suspicion. And our own immediate circle, to say nothing of our own lives, will furnish instances enough of the same tendency to set up other and less exacting standards than those of Jesus, to which we profess allegiance. One may put up a most satisfying pretense, while yet cold-hearted and self-willed. But Jesus demands of men such a life as only a loving heart, however it is to be come by, can make possible. Clever dialectic and all subterfuge he brushes to one side.

II

Our twentieth century thought, like that of the first century, is disposed to regard men as the spectators and society as the final judge of moral conduct. If humanity applauds, well and good—we may rest content. Just so far as our estimates are dependent on the glory of men, they are out of touch with the teaching of Jesus. He was not in the least abashed to assert that every man lives in so close a relation with his Heavenly Father that day by day he is under God's most real and solicitous observation. And anyone who forgets this, or lives as in the sight of men only, is likely to be betrayed into grievous defects of character.

We all understand today that life is measured by the correspondence of inner to outer relations. If one's moral life is adjusted only to our human world, without reference to that vital spiritual environment of God's presence, it goes crippled of its true resources. Maladjustment means limitation, poverty of life.

Jesus expressed this in the familiar words, "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." The mistake men were making in Jesus' day was in seeking the praise of men more than the praise of God.

We do that still. But many of those to whom he spoke did it in a very foolish way, that we have largely outgrown. We have outgrown it just because this teaching of Jesus has sunk so deep in popular understanding as to have become a part of our moral inheritance. The shame of hypocrisy, and the ridiculousness of it, seem to us perfectly obvious—not so to Jesus' audience that day, or to any audience outside of Christendom even now. Those men saw nothing humorous in a man's stopping suddenly on a street corner, where he was much in the way, throwing his praying shawl over his shoulders, and engaging earnestly in prayer. To us it would be ludicrous and rather disgusting for a man so to parade the sacred and secret devotion of his soul. But to them it was a highly edifying and agreeable spectacle.

So it is today all over Asia and Africa where Muhammad holds sway—he who kneels in the broad sunlight of a public square and prays toward Mecca is a devout child of the prophet, and much to be commended. We simply cannot conceive the mental state of a full-grown man who carries a prayer-wheel with him about his work, as the Tibetans do, and twirls it industriously at odd moments, that he may obtain credit both of heaven and of his neighbors as a pious man. The Chinese are no fools. But among them a *shing-shan-ti,* or doer of virtue, is a perfectly familiar and highly esteemed character. Yet his virtue is largely of the sort that, for instance, buys and sets free captive birds in large numbers, said birds having been snared and caged—as everyone knows—for this express purpose.

All this indicates how deeply this teaching of Jesus has affected Christendom. His scathing satire has largely done its work. We understand what he meant. We see that if we do our righteousness before men to be seen of them, we are somehow like men building on the sand—we are putting jerry workmanship into our characters. The trouble is that while we can see the unreality so plainly in the forms in which Jesus pointed it out—the naively childlike ways of bland hypocrisy—we are not quick to detect it in other forms in ourselves, as when we, who claim to be ardent seekers after truth, find ways of dodging inconvenient truths that profoundly invigorate the soul, yet are not susceptible of scientific demonstration.

III

Plain character-building is sometimes likely to be cold, barren work. Jesus would not have it so. Trudging, like Weir of Hermiston, "up the great bare staircase of duty" is not life as he thought of it. And we shall do well to linger a moment on that recurring phrase of his, "thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." Perhaps none of us, in our day, would have dared to say this quite so frankly; nor would we have referred, without apology, to the "reward with our Father in heaven." We seem to have reached a plane of delicate sentiment too refined to speak much about rewards. Following that medieval saint with her torch and bucket—the one to burn up heaven, the other to extinguish hell—we have maintained that men should be righteous without any regard to rewards and punishments, through plain love of virtue.

It must be admitted that the theory is a trifle chilly, and not quite suited to the needs of ordinary men, who are wonderfully moved by considerations of personal welfare. Jesus deals with this half-sentimental affectation after his own fashion. He does not even apologize to it, he ignores it altogether. He knew that in a true and abounding sense virtue is its own reward. But he was keenly conscious of the fact that, under the moral economy of his Father's household, virtue was bound up inseparably with ever fresh privilege and reward. Every thoughtful man knows it to be so, but never a man realized this so keenly as did Jesus. He alone knew the full graciousness of his Father's love; he alone knew what reviving and refreshing joy came from Him to light up with gladness the dull way of duty.

He was not afraid of being misunderstood or of appealing to mercenary motives in speaking of the fact in a very homely way, almost as to children, speaking plainly of the reward that the Father's love brought to those who were faithfully obedient to him. Possibly he would not have spoken quite so simply to our more sophisticated minds, but, as a matter of fact, here is what he said, and it is pleasant and comforting to think of. There is nothing chilly about it. It is the language of the Elder Brother in the household regarding the Father's treatment of the children—that the Father,

though quite unobserved by us, is observant of his household, and recompenses with the surprises of his kindness those who live in patient loyalty to him. He has them in mind, he gladdens them by showing that he has not forgotten.

And so it was poor business for God's children to be fishing for compliments from men, angling for their applause, when the good God was quick to see and keen to appreciate every service done genuinely unto him. It was a very homely way to speak, and some in our day may feel that it is a little below their level. But he who will receive it, let him receive it! He will take endless comfort in its warmth and graciousness; and if he is a bit tired and disheartened in the long fight for character, and it seems a little barren and colorless, with no one noticing his up-hill efforts, let him remember that Jesus said repeatedly that the Father seeth in secret and Himself will recompense us. Jesus evidently believed it, in as matter-of-fact a way as he believed in the scowling presence of the Pharisees. We shall be fortunate if we can believe it, too, and person with person—God somewhere in secret and we here in the sunlight—live sincerely unto him.

IV

Jesus' idea of reality in the Christian left no place for a dull, dispirited compliance with unavoidable duty. That was out of the question for one who trusted as he did in his Father's good will. But he also left no room for any of his followers to shuffle along after him in the cheerful comfort of half-secrecy, dodging unfriendly observation and escaping inconvenient publicity. He asked for an outright, conspicuous loyalty, answering to the inward spirit of genuine allegiance. He had no use for the tentative experimental attitude of one who was not quite sure whether or how far discipleship was practicable, but was willing to venture a small investment that he could afford to lose. Honesty to him meant outrightness; and outrightness radiates help for others.

So he said confidently to those half-taught, immature disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world." It rather takes one's breath away to be thrust into the lime-light like this. The friendly shadows

would be a good deal more to our liking. We know enough of our own imperfections to feel persuaded that this is getting on too fast. We are not worthy of such honor. Somebody else must be slated for these influential positions of trust—we are not the timber for preferment such as that.

But Jesus' meaning was unmistakable. He knew what he was doing and held to his policy consistently to the end. If any man were genuinely following after him he would be a savior of society. If anyone truly walked in the light of his counsel, he would be a light for others. They would see him, and by his witness and example would find the way. There have been innumerable so-called Christians of whom this was not true, who were worse than useless for the healing or leadership of society. There will be innumerable more. But it is not for one of us to be among them, if we would be the sterling article. Jesus merely states a matter of fact when he says that the hope of the world rests on these men and women who have caught his spirit. He counts on them to finish what he began; he counts on them to sweeten and save the world. If we, too, are living in an illusion as insincere disciples, we also may help to plunge the world in misery. But if we are true to his leadership, we shall inevitably be a preserving power and an illumination for those in the dark.

There is simply no denying the truth of this principle. It is to be seen written in staring capitals in many parts of the world today—for instance, in the South Seas. Anyone who has read Jack London's or Mrs. London's diary of "The Voyage of the Snark" must have felt the aching tragedy of the destruction of the native islanders by disease. Wherever the white man has gone much among them, as in the Marquesas group, they have almost quite rotted away with tuberculosis and asthma and diseases of the skin and blood, until scarcely any able-bodied men remain. Modern civilization has meant to them quick corruption and decay. Jack London has no special fondness for the missionary, but he, like Robert Louis Stevenson, could not fail to notice that where the disciples of Jesus have gone they have been a preserving salt for those ready to perish. They have fought for them to the death against drunkenness and savagery and licentiousness, and in many regions have kept their people

from the abyss. It is not so picturesque, but it means life instead of death.

In every city of England and America one finds the same two forces side by side. And in ten thousand ways that are not so conspicuously evident, the men and women who genuinely seek to do the great Master's will are holding civilization together, in these days when ruthlessness has been threatening to blast it into ruin. Love is the conserving power—as a matter of the most commonplace observation, as of a laboratory experiment a thousand times repeated. Love redeems! And all honest approach to Jesus brings one into touch with love. Only the make-believe Christianity, the formal variety, leaves out the essential love and contents itself with cheaper substitutes of forms and professions and ideals that do not operate. But the real rock-built character is always and everywhere concerned with the help of men.

V

Jesus insisted not only that genuine religion meant love, but that it meant truth. It could not be otherwise in his view, because men lived not only under the observation of society but under the eye of God. There was no use in fraud or evasion or hypocrisy of any sort, because all things were naked and open before him with whom we have to do. And as men were with God, so they should be with one another—not only truthful, not only honest, but "splendidly candid" in their sincerity.

The Church has often been at a dismal remove from its Master in this respect, as in others. And yet it must be plain to all, that, as Orientals have so often borne witness, love of truth is a Christian virtue. If our forefathers hated a lie, it was because they had drunk deep of the spirit of Him who was truth incarnate, and from all sham or equivocation or disingenuous compromise they turned away with fear and loathing. They did not care to be deceived, however pleasant the deceit; they would rather keep their faces straight set toward reality, however grim the prospect. No doubt they made mistakes abundantly, but they would not consciously palter with the truth. They could not, and keep undisturbed

at the same time their fellowship with the God of Jesus Christ.

It is worth noting this fact seriously, because of its bearing on faith in Jesus' message. He has been for humanity, without question, a very fountain-head of truth. Wherever his influence goes today it challenges falsehood and smites at fraud and imposition. To him, as to the Old Testament Jehovah, an unjust weight and all it stood for were an abomination.

And yet a popular type of criticism today affirms that he is the center of the world's greatest illusion; that he has entangled humanity for two thousand years in a network of untruth and unreality; that he was himself half deluded and half deluding, and bequeathed to men—along with much good—a heritage of mocking shadows, with his empty talk of a Heavenly Father and a future life. One shrinks a little from admitting it, but it is evident enough that if this popular skepticism is right, Jesus was the active center of an aggregation of untruths so colossal that the imagination can hardly grasp its monstrousness. The ills that so vast a system of deceit must have brought on humanity are past computation, as we think of the scores of generations cradled in a lie. It is Jesus himself who has thrust upon the world a whole series of false weights and measures in the precious values of the soul.

As over against this contention of so many learned scholars in our day, we have to set the indisputable fact that Jesus has been the world's inspiration to a splendid candor in the search for truth. If Livingstone in the African forest felt him to be true as a sword-blade, the confidence made Livingstone himself of a knightly honor in keeping faith with his black carriers who followed him to the western ocean. One simply cannot build character on Jesus' lines and tolerate any cheap advantages of deceit, whether self-deceit or the deceit of others. And since a fountain cannot send forth both sweet water and bitter, we who have felt Jesus' leadership, and heard his ringing challenge to fearless righteousness, must count him also true and dependable altogether.

CHAPTER V

Be Ye Merciful

DAILY READINGS

Never was the world so hungry for mercy as today. With fascinated gaze it has been watching year after year the working out of the opposite of mercy, the ruthless will to power. And it has come to the point where men are forced to see that along the line of the most scientific organization for efficiency, apart from the divine quality of kindness of heart, there is no hope for society. We should not have been agreed on this point a few years ago. Jesus' program for the enlargement of human life through kindness seemed then a trifle naive in its childlike impracticability. But today we have looked into the abyss of a merciless self-will and have sickened with the fear that it might be deep enough to engulf all Christendom in chaos. And the far-off call out of a distant past to be merciful to one another, because our Father is merciful to us all, has suddenly broken in upon the twentieth century, loud and compelling, like a trumpet-call close at hand.

Never before were great nations so ready to listen to Jesus' message at this point. Kindness is a very humble virtue. A washerwoman or a bootblack might achieve it as well as a statesman or a captain of industry. Yet he made it the seal of the divine in human character. There was no such thing as noble character without it. One might be a genius in war or letters, but to be unmerciful was to be unlike God, and in the end to be brought to shame. The Most High is love. If we are indeed his children we shall be tenderhearted of necessity.

Our study for this week deals with this fundamental element in great character.

Fifth Week, First Day

And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.—Luke 6: 32-36.

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The words of Jesus about love of one's enemies are in illustration of this ancient utterance. They bid us to be like God; and we say it is impracticable, impossible. They may be most difficult as a command, but they are most comforting as a revelation of what God is like. However ill-tempered or unforgiving we may be by nature, it is good to know that our Father is not like us, but that his mercy utterly outruns our comprehension. And Jesus, knowing his Father as he did, could do nothing else than put kindness at the center of great character—because only so could the Son be like his Father. We may stagger at the necessity, but it is plainly a necessity if we are to be his followers.

Without trying now to determine how far this command may reach at the farthest, let us recognize and accept what is beyond question—its homely application to common life. Probably most of us have no enemies worth calling such. The nearest approach to it are the people who, we think, don't do us justice, who don't like us, or have misunderstood us, or spoken or thought ill of us. They may even have done us an ill turn. We retaliate by thinking hardly of them. Jesus calls us to a nobler mind—to treat them with good will, to seek their good instead of their humiliation, and to win them as God wins men, by love.

O Lord! shed a new light on my relations with the people I do not like. Open my eyes to whatever is mean, or ungenerous, or unkind in my attitude, and give me a clearer vision of what thy love would have me be.

Fifth Week, Second Day

Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.—Matt. 5: 38-42.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.—Eph. 4: 31, 32.

What ordinary human nature wants in a quarrel is plain enough—it wants to give as good as it gets. In old times it wanted to give a good deal better; and a great ethical advance was achieved when Moses held his people down to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. There was a rude justice about this that seemed fairly satisfactory. But Jesus made it plain that this was not God's way. It is not even the way of our own fathers and mothers. Imagine a mother trying to "get even" with her children every time they disobeyed her or gave her pain! How intolerable home would be!

And so would our world be if God were to treat us in that fashion. But "he delighteth in mercy." He wins us to him by kindness that astonishes us. Jesus says, "One is your Father, and all ye are brethren." And from this he draws the inevitable conclusion that we must treat each other as God treats us—not retaliating with spitefulness for spitefulness and ill will for ill will, going through life standing stiffly on our rights, looking out sharply for slights and injuries, always ready for a quarrel; but generous and forgiving, winning our enemies by a good will that refuses to be defeated.

O God, give me such a sense of thy lovingkindness to me personally as shall make it impossible for me to be harsh or ungenerous to any of thy children.

Fifth Week, Third Day

And as Jesus passed by from thence, he saw a man, called Matthew, sitting at the place of toll: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners? But when he heard it, he said, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice: for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.—Matt. 9:9-13.

There was a brief sentence in the Greek version of the Old Testament that had captured Jesus' thought years before, and on which he had evidently thought much. He quotes it repeatedly in defense of his own actions, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It is a revelation of what God is like, and of what he wants of men if they are to please him—not the stately worship of temple or cathedral, not even the sacrifice of the mass or the chanted creed of the true faith, but pity for the distressed, help for the weak, healing for the sick, loving sympathy for the unclean.

It is easy at this distance to think of Jesus in a sentimental way as the friend of sinners; but at the time, when there was no halo about his head or glamor about his person, his actions must have been a sore trial to one of such sensitive tastes. Certainly he found nothing congenial in the coarseness and vulgarity of that irreligious crowd of social outcasts. He chose their company by sheer compulsion of sympathy. He understood them and the struggle of the divine in them for life, and he gave himself to them as God has given himself to us. It is glad tidings in itself. It makes our coldly selfish world a different place to live in. But it constitutes a law for our lives if we would be his followers.

So great an achievement in character will not come of itself while we are busy with our own concerns. It will demand time and attention for the study of the needs and claims of people beyond our social horizon.

Fifth Week, Fourth Day

And he departed thence, and went into their synagogue and behold, a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, as the other. But the Pharisees went out, and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him.—Matt. 12:9-14.

Those scribes and Pharisees were not consciously in the wrong that morning. They thought they had the right perspective of values. Some things were unspeakably precious to them as safeguards of their national religion, especially the sanctity of the Sabbath. The man with the deformed hand, on the contrary, was of no account to them—they may have seen him every day for years and never even given a thought to his deformity.

Jesus, on the other hand, was frankly sorry for the man. He thought what it would mean to him to be set free and made once more the breadwinner, instead of the burden of his family. He saw well enough that the sanctity of the Sabbath would not suffer from such a deed of pity. So he healed the man, even though by doing so he imperiled his own life.

There we see what a really noble character is like. It is so much like God that it notices other people's distresses and makes an effort to relieve them, even at the cost of trouble to itself. Their troubles it makes its own concern. Numberless people in the eighteenth century bemoaned the sufferings of the prisoners; but only John Howard was great enough to make their wretchedness his own affair and give his life for their relief.

Mercy such as this is divine, no matter where we see it. If we might spend our lives in some such service it would be a career of high distinction.

Fifth Week, Fifth Day

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.—Matt. 6: 9-15.

And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.—Mark 11: 25.

We are all ready enough to admit that dishonesty or dissipation are enemies to good character; the penalty for such weaknesses is only too certain. We are not so quick to see what a perilous thing it is to bear a grudge, to have an unforgiving temper. Apparently in Jesus' mind it was more to be feared than the open loss of respectability incurred by some sin of indulgence. It was the one common sin of which he said that it shut one out from the mercy of God. We can, of course, differ with him, and count this a mere eccentricity of judgment on his part. But if he was right, then a good many so-called Christians are gravely wrong. Some even take pride in the fact that they are good friends but bad enemies—that they have a long memory for an injury. And a good many more, while not going as far as this, allow a hard word or a mean action from another to settle down into their lives like a drop of poison in a spring, embittering their thoughts and cankering for the time being their outlook upon life. Jesus was severe in his condemnation of this harshness. And even in the brief prayer that he taught his disciples he committed them to an inexhaustible readiness to forgive.

Every time we repeat the Lord's Prayer we say, Lord, treat me as I treat those who have offended me.

Fifth Week, Sixth Day

Then came Peter and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee,

Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, that owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred shillings: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.—Matt. 18: 21-35.

"Shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant even as I had mercy on thee?" That is the principle that underlies all Jesus' demands for kindness among his disciples. It is not an unconditioned ethical demand for benevolence in social relations. It is bound up with his Gospel of God's love. John put it in another form when he said, "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." If we are to have Christian character worthy of the name, it will be character in which the experience of our Father's forgiveness has a large place, and in such character harsh treatment of those who have offended us would be an enormity. By the time any of us are fifty, if we think only of the record of other lives that are the poorer for our unfaithfulness or indifference on innumerable occa-

sions when we might have helped—a pitiful record of losses we can never overtake or cancel—we shall be sensible of the need of merciful forgiveness from God. And for us, who live in hope only because of our Father's goodness, to demand the last farthing of our rights from our neighbor, is unthinkable. The very suggestion of it roused the indignation of Jesus.

The gentleness of spirit that marks the noblest character and that always has been called par excellence the "Christian spirit," is rooted far down out of sight in the eternal fact of God's love.

Fifth Week, Seventh Day

And when they came unto the place which is called The skull, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also scoffed at him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, his chosen. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou art the King of the Jews, save thyself.—Luke 23: 33-37.

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.—Acts 7: 59, 60.

No words could so reenforce Jesus' insistence on forgiveness of injuries as does this brief ejaculation out of a tempest of pain just before his death. The Roman soldiers were used to seeing men, in the sudden onset of physical agony as they were being nailed to the cross, burst out upon them with delirious oaths and cursing, gnashing upon them like mad dogs in rage. We stand in awe at the grandeur of Jesus' spirit, that at that moment of supreme suffering he was not swept out of his self-control by pain, but was actually thinking of those poor callous wretches who tortured him. He was so far master of himself that the ruling spirit of forgiveness, strong in death, rose triumphantly over all

other feelings. It is beyond us. We see again what God is like. It is a super-victory over human nature.

But it reminds us that the divinest thing in us is not that which cries out for vengeance on those who have done us wrong. As Edith Cavell said, a few hours before she was led out to be shot, with the clear vision of one standing on the edge of eternity, "I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred nor bitterness toward anyone." We recognize in that utterance the very spirit of Jesus.

In the presence of death, forgiveness seems a necessary thing. Jesus calls for it in the heyday of vigorous life.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The *motif* of all the passages for this week is found in the word of Jesus, "Ye shall be sons of the Most High." He brings the sanction of a divine heredity to reenforce the plain ethical demand for human kindness. *Noblesse oblige.* "You are of the nobility; live nobly, then, with your fellows." We can make little headway in the understanding of his argument save as we share his confidence in the lovingkindness of our Father, a lovingkindness that reacheth unto the heavens. If we are to measure ourselves and our obligations by anything less than this—as by social expediency or a humanitarian idealism—we shall fall a good deal short of sympathy with him who spoke as the Elder Brother of the great family, strong in the assurance of an eternal power of love binding the family together. Like a wireless instrument not attuned to the vibrations of the sender, we shall be unable to catch his spirit if we have no personal experience of our Father's infinite mercy and forgiveness.

Everyone today must be conscious of a grave danger of unreality in discussing these sayings of our Lord, because we have known what it is to be swept away from our ordinary moorings by the strong passions of the War. Whatever measure of assent we might have been able to accord them in days of peace, we realize that new and strange forces have been at work upon us to make us either disregard their application to our enemies, or else profess them with a half-

heartedness or insincerity that endangers our whole loyalty to Jesus' leadership.

It is of no use to try to evade the problem here presented. We must have sincerity at any cost. Even if we were obliged squarely to differ with Jesus at this point, it would be better to be honest in our demand for truth than to part company with reality in our profession of obedience. He unquestionably warns men against anger, evil-speaking, and the use of force. And yet we have found ourselves involved, with all Christendom, in a war to the death, with all the merciless horror that that implies. Are we just so far untrue to him? Some earnest voices about us, mostly silenced in actual war-time, say emphatically yes. Jesus refused to use or countenance force. We cannot be his disciples, they say, and approve of war. The inconsistency of it is not only manifest but glaringly grotesque. What answer can be made that will satisfy our own misgivings?

II

In our study of these passages it is only reasonable to inquire first as to the field of their undisputed application. It has always been recognized that there must needs be a considerable borderland for possible casuistry as regards perplexing or exceptional situations. But the main field is perfectly clear and well-defined, and we have no excuse for not reaching assured conclusions. Jesus is plainly speaking of the ordinary personal intercourse of man with man and neighbor with neighbor.

He declares first of all that, in order to be his disciple, one under provocation must not only refrain from violence to his brother—keeping the ancient command to do no murder—but must hold to his attitude of fundamental good will. To give rein to passion and pour out in language all the hatred and ill will that would use violence if it dared, is to be false to the brotherly spirit of the new kingdom and to betray the presence of a heart defiant of God's command. Wrangling and quarreling will spoil the life of a disciple of Jesus as effectually as assault and murder, and words of cold bitterness will slay a loving temper like a sword-thrust. It is perfectly obvious what our Lord was trying to enforce,

and if we accept his faith in a true Fatherhood and brotherhood for men we cannot withhold our assent. It forbids all rancor and hatred in our social relations, even at the cost of stern self-control under acute exasperation. Even if we have suffered heavy injury, the attempt to take it out in violent language or personal abuse of our assailant merely reacts upon the peace and health of our own soul.

The teaching is at all times far from easy to obey, and we may poorly attain to it. But it is at least intelligible and reasonable, and if we propose to be followers of Jesus we shall be sincerely honest in our effort to reach it. But with war, elements utterly new enter into the situation. What is plain enough in the ordinary relations of life becomes a hopeless enigma when we face the ruthless enemies of a world peace. Are we to pretend to use toward them the language of brotherly love?

Certainly a different principle is here involved. Jesus was speaking about personal rancor. It is clear that he was not thinking about judicial condemnation of evil, or moral indignation at the wrongs of others. We cannot imagine him angrily reviling a personal adversary; but neither can we imagine anyone speaking with more piercing severity than did he when he said to his friend, "Get thee behind me, Satan," or called the Pharisees a generation of vipers and children of hell. Often he spoke out the truth when the truth cut like a knife and infuriated his hearers. No man ever shrank less from hurting people's feelings, when it was for their good that they should be hurt, or when it was for the benefit of others that the truth should be frankly exposed. Nor would he ask men to veil the truth behind an affectation of pious unwillingness to condemn. There are times of peril, when the common welfare demands the exposure of flagrant wrong in words that scorch like a flame, and a steady witness against it, while the peril lasts, in the merciless sternness of white-hot moral indignation. Even such language may spring from a root of love, and be not inconsistent with the good will of which Jesus spoke.

III

We come now from words to deeds. Jesus unquestionably forbade the use of force in our ordinary personal relations.

It is not by blows that our wrongs are to be set right. Plainly there is a better wisdom, and love is the weapon by which his disciples were to win their way through life. Still more evident is it that Jesus himself did not use force. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. His whole career was one which discouraged the use of violence. And we of today have seen good men leaving their pulpits because they, remembering how Jesus refused to make use of force in the righting of wrong, could not conscientiously approve the appeal to war. Did they rightly appraise his teaching, and are those who take part in such a world struggle untrue to his example?

It is to be firmly insisted on that in all these sayings Jesus is neither thinking nor speaking of the judicial or civic processes that may be necessary for the maintenance of social order—any more than he meant to do away with courts and judges when he said, "Judge not that ye be not judged." The words plainly apply to personal relationships, and are misunderstood and misapplied when applied to social institutions. Jesus lived with his mother and sisters in the little village of Nazareth in perfect security, because the strong arm of the Roman government was interposed between them and the marauding tribes of the desert to the East. It is absurd to suppose that when he said, "Resist not evil" he meant that the strong arm of the law should be withdrawn, and the common people of Galilee be exposed to the ravages of pillaging invaders. He recognized the need and the beneficence of a civil government's using force.

Moreover, it is to be kept clearly in mind that while Jesus' refusal to use force was necessary to the carrying out of his own function in the world, it by no means implies that a different function would not demand a different method. As he said himself, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world"; "there is one that judgeth." It was not his function either to pronounce or to execute judgment. But it was someone's function! He left men in no doubt as to that. He himself wept over guilty Jerusalem. But he plainly warned her that, in the righteous plan of God, her day of retribution was close at hand. Once the impetuosity of his indignation almost led him to overstep his function, when

he took upon himself the neglected duty of the police and drove out bodily from the temple those who trespassed on the people's rights. Suppose he had been the one legitimately responsible for the maintenance of those rights, instead of one quite without authority in the premises. Would he have suffered the wrong in passive forbearance?

We remember his terrible denunciation of the men who devoured widows' houses, in words that must have burned like corrosive acid. Suppose that instead of being the Great Teacher and Good Physician he had been the District Attorney for Jerusalem, charged with the rooting out of all that gang of grafters, both respectable and vicious, who preyed on the weak and friendless. Suppose that the protection of the rights of the poor against the aggressions of the powerful rested directly upon him. It would have been a goodly and a godly work, but it would have led him through some strange scenes of violence if those Jewish plunderers had been as truculent as are the human sharks who prey on the bodies and souls of men in our cities today. Jesus never challenged, directly or indirectly, the necessity for this function of the State or of its servants, for the guarding of the people in quiet security from the cruel enemies who lay in wait for them like wolves. We believe he would have aided it in every way in his power. He would have rendered to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.

This undoubted function of government ordinarily involves only the small circle of those officially appointed to protect the public and maintain order. The mass of the people are left free to pursue their several ways in safety. Indeed, for them to use violence in the maintenance of their rights—to take the law in their own hands—is not only to disobey the teaching of Jesus but to be guilty of a criminal offense. But occasionally, as in these past two years, the safety of the people may be so imperiled, their fundamental rights, under which alone a life of peace and happiness is possible, may be so invaded, that the State calls for the help of every able-bodied citizen; not only of the little circle of official guardians of the peace, but of millions, who are thus suddenly summoned from a life of peace to share the burden of stern war—to take up this divinely ordained function of maintaining justice and judgment and upholding the public righteousness.

without which the joy of the common people is turned to distress and even nations are brought to destruction.

Would Jesus counsel these citizens to defy the State's beneficent authority, to refuse the summons, and let the wolf-pack ravage as it will? Does love of one's neighbor demand that we should turn our backs when ravening outrage and cruelty have broken loose upon those we are able to defend? Does the spirit of good will and pity demand that we should stop our ears and pass by on the other side when the man on the Jericho road is at his last gasp under the robbers' hands? It is impossible for us so to construe the teaching or the example of our Lord. As a matter of human experience, love does not so interpret its duty. If we as individuals are authoritatively called against our wills to be the defenders of another's peace, when that peace is threatened with violence, we act unselfishly and impersonally in obeying; and it would seem to be in harmony with the spirit of Jesus that we should be bravely faithful to that trust, undesired, but thrust upon us at heavy cost to our ease and safety.

IV

But even this does not wholly answer our perplexity. The act of war involves us in hideous incongruities as Christians. It is certainly possible for the noblest type of man to fight without hatred or bitterness. General Lee and many another great soldier have placed this beyond dispute. But how can anything be approved by God that is attended in actual fact by the unleashed passion and furious rage of men past all control in the delirium of hand-to-hand fighting? Here is where many find an insoluble enigma, that seems to baffle all apology or explanation for Christian men. If men charged with overthrowing rampant wickedness were able to act as God's instruments with the cold passionless severity of a legion of angels, the problem would disappear. But as it is, their unfitness for such a task is pitifully manifest.

One can only answer that this is true. The human instruments are imperfect and unworthy, and under fierce strain the unworthiness may become even shockingly apparent. And yet, the imperfection with which they carry out their grim task of punishing evil does not make the task itself unrighteous or unworthy. As well might one say that the whole

judicial and penal system of society should be abandoned, because society has always flagrantly mishandled the task, and even till today our jails and prisons have often been hotbeds of abuse. The teaching of Jesus is not that we should abandon the effort to police our cities or to protect the State from organized vice and crime, because the administration of the law has always been so wretchedly imperfect.

The tiger in us lies not far below the surface, and many a necessary situation with which life at its present stage of development compels us to grapple brings the hateful qualities of a fighting animal into prominence. And yet, whether done well or ill, the work has to be done. If a man is fighting drunk and threatening to murder his wife and children, it is a horrid thing to see a policeman leap upon him and at last club him into insensibility before he can be thrust into the patrolwagon. And yet, distressing and odious as it is, and little as we should like to do it, the job has somehow to be done, and done on the instant, if the woman's life is to be protected. We may grant that it is the shame and punishment of society for its sins, either that a man should be fighting drunk or that a people should be so misled as to run amuck among its neighbors. We hope that the day is nearly past when such things can be. But so long as the cries of the tortured are in our ears, so long are the strong called to be the defenders of the weak; even though the strong are not without fault, and even betray, in responding to the call, that they, too, have need of God's forgiveness for their flaming temper.

Our whole discussion up to this point has been of a rare and terrible exception to the ordinary tenor of human life. As life is today, we have been forced to assume the unfamiliar and uncongenial function of impersonal executors of the will of the State, in resisting by force a cruel invasion of human rights. But it is an exception as rare as it is terrible, and, please God, it will never occur again in the experience of those now living. It should not fill our horizon, or blind us for a moment to the fact that, while war passes, there abides unchanging forever the necessity that the sons of the Most High should be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave them.

Even in war-time, the deepest levels of our thinking cannot

be of strife and human enmities. God comes first and last in each conscious day, and facing Him we face the redeeming power of love unto death. It is love that will win the day in the far end, because God is God, and we dare not lose touch with it. Even for ourselves, the only hope is in the forgiveness of God, and this being so we dare not set any limits to our forgiveness of others.

Jesus does not ask us for the impossible. Even God cannot forgive an impenitent man. There is no way to close the circuit of forgiveness if the offender refuses to be forgiven. Forgiveness without righteousness works worse evils than it cures, like a mother's indulgence of a spoiled child. But within the limits of the possible, Jesus calls for the utmost friendliness that can be exercised. Indeed, he shuts us out from the divine compassion if we are ourselves hard-hearted and unforgiving. Every time that we recite the Lord's Prayer in such a spirit we shut the gates of mercy on ourselves. As A. W. Hare long ago expressed it, in the "prayer of the unforgiving man":

"O God, I have sinned against thee many times from my youth up until now. I have often been forgetful of thy goodness; I have not duly thanked thee for thy mercies; I have neglected thy service; I have broken thy laws; I have done many things utterly wrong against thee. . . . Such is my guiltiness, O Lord, in thy sight; deal with me, I beseech thee, even as I deal with my neighbor. He has not offended me one-tenth, one hundredth part as much as I have offended thee; but he has offended me very grievously, and I cannot forgive him. Deal with me, I beseech thee, O Lord, as I deal with him. . . . I remember and treasure up every little trifle which shows how ill he has behaved to me. I am determined to take the very first opportunity of doing him an ill turn. Deal with me, I beseech thee, O Lord, as I deal with him."

We wish to keep the gates of mercy wide open for ourselves; but in sober truth it is our own attitude to our fellowmen which determines how far open they shall be—not through any arbitrary enactment of God, but in the natural working out of his moral order. A hard, grudging temper on our part shows that we have not ourselves the penitent and humble spirit that alone makes it possible for God

abundantly to forgive. We will not let his love completely in. Any sort of external or mechanical forgiveness we would accept, but the only real forgiveness that there can be—the breaking down of our selfish will and the subduing of our whole heart with thankful love and penitence—that we cannot have, if we are to hold on to our stubborn hardness to our brother.

And so it is a vital matter for Christian character that it should be tender-hearted. We have seen enough of a Christianity that can be satisfied with itself even when it is clean out of touch with its Master in this respect. The world groaned under the curse of it. It is for us to see to it that, in the tiny segment of Christendom which we fill, the spirit of Jesus actually is in control.

CHAPTER VI

Intensity of Purpose

DAILY READINGS

We are familiar today with the faces of the Cæsars, and even the rulers of Egypt long before Rome's greatness are not unknown to us. But no likeness of Jesus, of any sort, has been preserved. We know nothing of how he looked. And yet we need no one to tell us that, when at the age of thirty he left his home in Nazareth, he was not a young man with a weak mouth and feeble chin. Whatever else was in his face, firmness was there, and a resolute intensity that spoke of a purpose slowly matured and inflexible as iron. Certain writers of our day would almost make us feel that we are weak-minded if we trust in a Heavenly Father. But when we turn to him who is the Leader of all such as put their trust in God, we recognize with proud confidence that of all strong souls he was the strongest. He calmly planted a world-wide kingdom where men could see no room even for a Jewish sect to grow. He gave his life unhesitatingly for its establishment, because it meant righteousness and joy for men. There was an intensity about his purpose that did not spring from narrowness, but was rooted in clear vision of realities that run far out beyond our worldly horizons.

And in the nature of the case he called his followers and disciples to a like singleness of aim, stronger than life or death. He shared with them his vision, and he required of them the same dedication of themselves to the great redeeming plan of God. The only type of character which he could approve, or for which he could be held responsible, was one built up in a thoroughgoing, uncalculating devotion to a supreme end. The passages for the week reiterate this necessity from various angles.

Sixth Week, First Day

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and saith, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.—Mark 8: 31-38.

It is best to face at once this unwelcome assertion of the general principle involved, which men will always quote as its classical expression. It is the summing up of a necessity imbedded in the nature of the Christian life. There can be no genuine Christianity without it, although the Church has often pushed it clear out of sight because of the awkward obtrusiveness of such a requirement in a comfortable religion. Doctrines that the Church insisted on as essential to salvation, people used to believe easily; but it has never been easy anywhere to get men and women to deny themselves.

And yet there is no escaping the fact that this is where Jesus starts in the building of his disciples' character. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself . . . and follow me." Of course there always are and have been many people who are so taken up with the joy and privilege of the last part of the command—following him—that they obey the first part almost unconsciously in an abandonment of self-forgetfulness. It is the most natural thing in the world for them to do, and one might almost say the easiest. The woman at the feast of Simon, or Zacchæus in his luxurious home in Jericho, or Mary with her sister at Bethany—they

quite forgot themselves in their eagerness to show their gratitude to the Friend who had brought them the joy of life.

And, thank God! this is what Jesus meant by the command. Not an ascetic prescription of a disagreeable duty, but a call to a devotion so hearty, so overwhelmingly glad and grateful, that self somehow shrinks unnoticed into the background.

"Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight."

But this is truly a divine achievement.

Sixth Week, Second Day

Now there went with him great multitudes: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and asketh conditions of peace. So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.—Luke 14: 25-33.

The most desirable goods are never to be had at the bargain counter, in spite of human nature's quenchless hope that the best values can somehow be got for less than cost. Nowhere does this hold more true than in the field of character, although here also men have always been seeking cheap and easy ways to get a priceless good. Jesus seems to have gone almost to the extreme in his anxiety to shake off those

who were merely looking for bargains in the spiritual realm. Great multitudes were following him about, as though they were ready to cast in their all with him. Yet he knew that they were under a delusion, expecting benefits for which they would never pay the price. They really cared neither for him nor for his kingdom. So he tried almost roughly to discourage them from a moral enterprise for which they had no courage. He bade them to reckon up the cost before they made foolish promises that they would never keep. How much did they care for him and for his leadership? Did they honestly put him before anything else in life? If not, their freshly blossoming loyalty would never live through the storms of the next few months.

So he shook them off. There was no help for it. They were not in earnest. It had not dawned on them that this was a life-and-death matter. They would join him as lightly as our men joined the National Guard in the old days, and not as they enlisted later with France and the blood-soaked trenches only a few months away.

One cannot join the Army in war-time as a side-issue to other interests in life. No more can one take up casually with the leadership of Jesus.

Sixth Week, Third Day

And as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But he said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God. And another also said, I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—Luke 9: 57-62.

Possibly there were some generals in the War, a place on whose staff was looked on as a soft berth. But of a certainty there were others whose very attraction was that they

treated their aides as hardly as they did themselves. Their whole life was so absorbed in the struggle of the War, that privation and danger and death were simply not to be regarded as deterrent factors. They had a scorn like Kitchener's for indolent, ease-loving persons who yet like to wear a uniform. They used men without sparing them.

Jesus was such a leader. Especially as he began to come within sight of his own tragic end, did he startle his hearers with hard utterances that would never have come to his lips in the earlier days in Galilee. A forsaken man under the shadow of death does not talk in the same way as a hopeful young reformer in the springtime of his popularity. However gallant his own spirit, an unwonted type of sternness is apt to creep into his utterances. And Jesus was so weary of men and women who would not take life seriously, who would not stand the strain of character-building under his leadership! Again and again he seems deliberately to have set himself to discourage them, as in this passage, from impulsive profession of discipleship.

No one would be more regardful of real filial piety than he who rebuked the Pharisees for holding it lightly. But he would not allow it to be pleaded insincerely as an excuse for putting off decision in a moral crisis. These men were facing a spiritual emergency of inexpressible consequence to themselves and others—they must meet it with an unfaltering decision. Anything less on their part showed that they did not know what they were about.

When we discuss our personal attitude to the leadership of Jesus, we are not discussing a hypothetical problem of academic interest, but the crucial factor in our soul's life and health.

Sixth Week, Fourth Day

And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that are saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to

say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last.—Luke 13: 23-30.

These words may have become commonplace to us from long familiarity. But they must have been rather dreadful to listen to when they were first spoken, out of a solemn intensity of conviction. And still there is an air of doom about them. We would like to live in a world with no doom in it, no irretrievable loss, no too costly error. But Jesus was only enunciating, as regards supreme values, the principle that is plain enough in lesser things. The seemingly privileged and favored, who rely only upon their pull to carry them into the best positions, simply have no chance in any day of ultimate awards, as against the men from nowhere who have struggled fiercely for years to fit themselves for those responsibilities.

It is as true in the field of the spirit as in the world of railroading or engineering. Drifting may carry one long distances, but in the end of the day it lands no one where he wants to go. And if a man is not to be in deadly earnest about his own soul—truth and honor and faith and love, for his own sake and others'—in Heaven's name what is he to be earnest about? It is conceded that it is the mark of a live man to be enthusiastic in love and business and sport and politics and war; but to be enthusiastic about the Christian life is generally considered, especially in academic circles, to be in bad form. Jesus here tells us in homely phrase what he thinks about it. "Strive to enter in by the narrow door, for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." It is the great adventure. It must be made when one's will is still responsive to one's command. It is not too easy for the strongest, and yet easy enough for timid souls like Mr. Faintheart and Mr. Fearing.

Sixth Week, Fifth Day

Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.—Matt. 10: 34-39.

Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—Phil. 3: 13, 14.

There have been times when Christians were expected, so to speak, to be at ease in Zion, when to be a disciple of Jesus was supposed to mean a life of placid tranquillity, as befitted one who had made his peace with God. But wherever Jesus is in this world, there is strife and turmoil. You might as well plant a boulder in the middle of a swift stream and expect it to hold its place without rippling the oily smoothness of the current. You might as well place good Mr. Faithful in the streets of Vanity Fair and expect to avoid a collision and a brawl. The mob will surge down on Faithful, just as the white foam will leap about the obstructing boulder.

Jesus was under no illusion as to the clashing of wills that must take place in human society if a man stands firm for the pure, just will of God. There must be iron in his soul if he expects to win out in such a determination. If the path of least resistance is what he wants, the sooner he loses sight of Jesus Christ the better. For example, in the fields of art and literature and journalism, of law or politics, what chance has one of holding true to the principles of Jesus, unless he has a fidelity like tested steel? A half-and-half purpose, that only now and then quite masters his affection, is no good. He must count on painful and persistent opposi-

tion from within and without if he is to build a character after his Master's pattern.

It is the testimony of life that he who does yield up his life heartily to his Master's use, finds it again in a new richness, not for himself only, but for his fellows.

Sixth Week, Sixth Day

And his disciples asked him what this parable might be. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved. And those on the rock are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.—Luke 8: 9-15.

People sometimes take credit to themselves for their churchgoing—that they have chosen so excellent a church and sit under so powerful a preacher. We like to think that we are the better for listening to noble words. But, as Jesus pointed out, we might even sit under his preaching week by week and be none the better. Not hearing his words, but doing them, is the test of character. Especially do we need to remember what he said of those who had the finest teaching, and had a sincere purpose to shape their lives upon it, but whose characters grew shrivelled and useless because the divine in them was spoiled by the crowding pressure of other interests. The good seed was fairly choked as it grew, by competing cares and riches and pleasures, till their life became in God's sight a tragedy. They should have known that they could not successfully serve God and mammon, but they tried to do the impossible.

An enlisted man on reaching camp is not left twelve hours to doubt that he has been clean shorn away from his old life, and that henceforth Uncle Sam comes first every hour of the twenty-four. No one claims that there can be efficient military service without this absolute priority. And there is simply no escaping the fact that Jesus makes the same sort of claim on a life under his leadership. The committal to God's will takes precedence of every other interest. Only by such unqualified simplicity of aim can we keep ourselves steadily in fellowship with our Leader. Many know what it is to see men and women leaving college with a high, unselfish idealism, whose very faces, after a few years in active life, reveal that what was noblest in them is being clouded over.

Sixth Week, Seventh Day

And they come to Jericho: and as he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timæus, Bartimæus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the way side. And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way.—Mark 10: 46-52.

This passage is added as an illustration of the way in which a determined purpose draws to its aid resources of help that otherwise would be unavailable. The very audacity of intense desire cuts a way where timidity would find no way open. Especially is this true of our relations with a God of infinite resource, where Jesus encourages men to throw themselves boldly on his helpful good will. A fervent ambition to be what he would have us be finds unexpected means of success at its disposal, means that in actual experience con-

tinually revive a drooping or discouraged spirit. Not only does such a determination constantly react upon itself in the way of auto-suggestion, denying the possibility of defeat, but it actually reaches to strata of life-giving impulse that the indifferent or doubting man never discovers.

Here was this blind beggar, sitting listlessly by the roadside in the sun, like hundreds of other blind beggars all over Syria. No way of escape from their misery presented itself to the imagination of all those others. But with Bartimæus a hope sprang up that, once entertained, refused to be dismissed. His presumption and his pertinacity were a scandal even to the crowd. Jesus was not only not angry, but took sides with the disturber at once. And the man received his sight.

For all we know there may have been scores of others more worthy to receive such a blessing than he. But this particular beggar dared to venture all on the Master's readiness to help; and the audacious obstinacy of his confidence actually made a way to the light of day for him who had been blind. Only a deep-seated purpose lays two worlds tributary to the success of its desire.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary . . . they shall walk, and not faint."

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Many old lessons, long forgotten, are being relearned by Christendom under the influence of the World War. One is, that complete self-denial is not so difficult for common men, if the emergency be urgent enough to drown selfish consideration out of sight for the time being. Ordinarily, men sharply resent any interference on the part of the State with the ordered convenience of their lives. They raise an outcry over a call to jury duty; they resent being summoned as witnesses; they pay taxes grudgingly, and throw obstacles in the way of any inquiry into their private affairs. They feel that they have an inalienable right to mind their own

business in their own way, and any rights the State may have in them are of the most shadowy character.

Yet now, under the stunning impact of the War, we have seen men allowing the State, without a word of protest, to lay hands on all they have and are. They give up their business, they lay aside personal tastes and long established habits, they say good-by to home and family, they even submit their carefully groomed bodies to exposure and sickness and wounds and death uncomplainingly, accepting it all without debate as part of a reasonable order which no honorable citizen would refuse. The impossible sacrifice of self had become for them not only possible but easy, because of the stress of a national crisis vaster than they could comprehend. Men under those conditions do not even attempt to argue—they obey, as under a clear intuition of necessity.

And under the actual discipline of life in the trenches, this lesson of smilingly accepting another's will for the sake of the common good becomes like a second nature. As Harvey Johnson, the "Yankee Kid," has said, after his two years of perilous service, "I learned to take my medicine without squealing. I learned that you can do most anything if you tell yourself you've got to do it. I learned to take responsibility and to obey orders—what you'd call discipline, I guess. I learned to stand things, and to do it with a smile. If I ever forget that, I'll have forgotten how I saw men fight and die. And I guess when I forget that, I won't remember anything."

That is what war teaches about self-denial.

Jesus evidently looked out on the struggle of life like a man under war conditions. His whole being thrilled to the sense of a world emergency, submerging petty thoughts of private ease. He made amazing demands on men, without apology or, as we might think, without even adequate explanation. It was as though, with so many Frenchmen of late, the unspoken words *"C'est la guerre"* were just below the surface, making all intelligible, calling men to endurance or to heroism commonly beyond their reach. The contest was, for Jesus, one that involved eternal and infinite values for all mankind. It engaged his whole soul. How then could he speak of this moral warfare without a thrilling intensity of feeling?

II

There are certain clever writers in our day—or were before the War, when men had a mind to listen to their philosophy—whose light wit and satirical humor make all the issues of life seem trivial. Sin ceases to be blameworthy, virtue becomes tiresome, nothing is base enough or noble enough to be worth getting excited over, to know all is to excuse all, and even righteousness appears but moral pasteboard and tinsel. If we spend much time in the company of minds of this character our moral fiber inevitably relaxes, and all intensity of conviction or of purpose becomes bourgeois and distasteful.

Obviously such minds are in direct antagonism to Jesus. He tried to smite such folly from the minds of men. To come from its sophistry into his presence was to come into a different atmosphere, as from the languid warmth of a hothouse into a keen mountain air. He braces men to face a world of realities both terrible and gracious. He suffers no man to saunter through it carelessly, shielded by an armor of skeptical indifferentism. He bids men follow him, sensitively vulnerable by sympathy to the miseries of others, and sharing the divine hatred of sin and love of mercy. He drives men out of the cultured ease of the Laodicean, and precipitates them into rough strife in which one must venture all or stand confessed a slacker before God.

Life was no more a graceful jest to Jesus than it was to a Red Cross nurse at a base hospital in France during an offensive. He lived at the heart of things, and it is impossible but that his words should vibrate with the intensity of one stirred to the depths of his being by human need. If we read them casually, out of the careless unconcern of a perfect day of pleasure, we find them hard to understand. They jar upon us as stern and overwrought. But viewing them as war-time messages, and having in mind the same realities of irrepressible conflict that he saw—a conflict in which he was himself being sacrificed—we find them wise and reasonable and kind. Our first disposition to resist them fades away. Even this primary demand for self-denial by his followers becomes intelligible. It no longer appears an arbitrary exaction, designed to cut down life's pleasures with

a sort of Puritan severity, but a statement of an obvious necessity that we cannot wish to shirk.

In order to play the part in life that God would have us play, to be the kind of men that God would have us be, we must simply make flat denial of the theory of life that puts self-gratification first. Jesus demands that there should be a square turning around, a conversion, from the life that puts self-will before God's will. All character-building that goes on under an intermittent or half-hearted purpose is like house-building under two opposing sets of architect's plans—only confusion and loss can result.

And so he calls at the outset for a clear-cut decision for God, that shall go to the depths of one's soul. He is far enough from asking for an extensive wisdom as to himself and his purposes, as though these questions must be cleared up before any decisive action can be taken. It is as though he asked men, already convinced of God's right in them, to sign up for God's kingdom and God's righteousness with an absolute abandonment, ready to see where this would lead them, just as men sign up for national service, ready to respond to any assignment the Government sees fit to make. Most of us would not only like to have the way left open for unlimited discussion and argument as we go along, but to have the whole campaign explained to us at the outset, so that at any moment we could change our minds. But it is as clear as day that Jesus' uncompromising demand on men was for an initial act of unselfish allegiance, based on trust in God, that should hold good forever. A shifting wobbly foundation for long years of life-building was out of the question.

As Donald Hankey puts it, "Religion is betting one's life that there is a God."

III

One cannot even come within sight of the motive for genuine Christian living, without leaving behind altogether the atmosphere of spiritual bargain-hunting. All the issues in view are too great to allow of petty calculations of profit. When we come to reflect upon it, there is an austere dignity about the teachings of Jesus that is curiously unlike what we would expect of one trying to win recruits for a difficult

enterprise. He makes no promises of gain, he offers no bids for followers. He does not say how much they will get who obey his commands. He does not even promise them happiness, or peace, or joy, or love, or salvation.

If one will carefully read over the Synoptic Gospels, he is likely to be surprised to see how bare they are of any directly offered inducements for following Jesus. It is true that he points out the blessedness of those with certain qualities of character, as in the Beatitudes; but there is only one direct promise of benefit to those who choose him as Master—that of rest for the soul. He did say to that first group of the disciples that he would make them fishers of men, and near the end he spoke enigmatically of the reward that should be to those who had left home or family for his sake. But there is a majestic dignity of reserve about the whole matter of the benefits to be had in his service. The gospels, in the bare simplicity of their narrative, are strange documents for propaganda. Certainly they record more sayings of Jesus that tend to discourage impulsive allegiance than such as fan into flames the embers of enthusiasm.

The fact is that Jesus did not try, like Muhammad, to make men covet heaven for its rewards. He was concerned first and last with character. As a result, he brought men face to face with the great realities of righteousness and the great motives for spiritual conquest, and left with them the choice, but a choice so irradiated with divine love and forgiveness and mercy that it was like an open door of hope. He must have made it shiningly clear that the message of the Kingdom of God was glad tidings. To enter into it, here and now, was to gain the great possessions of the soul. To lose one's life for it was to find it. But the whole enterprise and engagement was one of seeking to do the will of God and of bringing it to pass in one's life and in the world. The unmeasured capacities of the soul found their satisfaction there. He must always have made men feel, even if he did not say it, that peace and joy and life lay behind that binding up of the child's will with the Father's. The estrangement of sin was done away, and the sunlight of his favor made life glad. And yet, to those frankly worldly crowds to whom he spoke, it must have seemed at best an austere and unrewarding faith.

It was in full view of these great realities of the Kingdom of God and of the infinite possibilities of a life of fellowship with him, that Jesus spoke so plainly of turning one's back on self as the first step in the Christian path. He was clearing the way for the great motives of love and gratitude and loyalty to righteousness. They have no chance where self-assertion and self-love and self-pity are always blocking the road. Our doubts and fears and pains and pleasures are frequently enough to use up all the vitality of the spirit and leave nothing over. Jesus says, This is divine business. Forget yourself for a little, give me all your heart's loyalty, and we will walk together to the end, in the life that overcomes. Not the half-gloomy negative of the self-forgetting, but the joy and the strength of that divine fellowship is the positive, essential feature of the situation. But nothing can be more plain than that it is of no use setting out to build a character under the direction of Jesus, without a complete and far-reaching submission of the soul to him.

IV

It is Emerson who said, "Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of some enthusiast." One only needs to know life to know how true that is. It is the man who loses sight of himself in his job who does the great things. Even in civil life today the men who are accomplishing the great tasks, whether like Schwab or Edison or Hoover, are so devoted to the work they are doing that they have no time to be listening for praise or blame, or even to preserve an all-round interest in other departments than their own. They are enthusiasts. One only needs to think of them, and of the need of the world for men of fiery intensity today, to realize how ridiculous and contemptible is the attitude of *blasé* indifferentism, of languid superiority to vulgar enthusiasms, that has been carefully cultivated by a certain type of cultured men, too broad and too worldly-wise to be caught in any narrow current of impetuous and vehement devotion to any cause or any leader.

Nowhere is this contrast so clear as in the long struggle for the good of humanity, where wrongs and sorrows are so pitiful and where the emotions are deeply stirred by sympathy. What has become of the academic calm in the lives of

those highly educated men who served for a year or more on the Relief Commission in Belgium? Never while they live will the flame of pity and indignation cease to burn like a fire in their bones, because they have seen and suffered under the sorrows of that outraged people. And the man who can come close up to the fortunes of the heavy-laden multitude, as Jesus did, and yet hold himself indifferent and unmoved in face of their mute appeal, is something less than human. But there have been, and still are, millions such in Christendom. The Church has at times been choked with them. Our universities have too often been their breeding-ground. Right and wrong, sin and sorrow and joy, degradation and deliverance, as forces ever working among the people, have only feebly stirred their interest in comparison with business and society, with art and literature and science.

But Jesus! How completely he surrendered himself to the tides of divine sympathy that surged up in him! How gloriously he championed the right and threw himself against the wrong! How passionately he gave himself and all he had to the cause of God, here among the homes of men! To look at him, to catch one glimpse of his spirit, is to understand that saying of Lincoln's, "The only ground between right and wrong is battle-ground." Only to come within the outermost circle of Jesus' influence is to feel oneself being drawn into the good fight. All pretense of indifference or languidness or superiority becomes odious, intolerable. We are his partisans! We cleave to him! We only ask that his will may be done in us, and that we may manfully serve his cause on earth.

And yet so witty and wise a clergyman as Sydney Smith wrote, "The Gospel has no enthusiasms." To him, as to multitudes of churchmen in his time, it had not. It was a way of virtue and respectability for respectable people, and anything that savored of enthusiasm—whether it was Methodism, or missions, or aggressive evangelism of any sort—was vulgar and objectionable. But that spirit of conventional moderation and propriety, bled white of any red drops of passionate devotion, made his age one of a sterile selfishness that we blush to remember.

A singular leader Jesus was for so prudent a gentleman as Sydney Smith, or for men and women in our time who

would make use of Jesus, as they would make use of Confucius or of Plato, only so far as to feel the ethical uplift of his teachings. It is impossible to make any sympathetic study of the commands of Jesus without seeing that he asks for something more, something that it searches the very soul to give, a completeness of surrender to his spirit that would attach his followers to himself by bands so strong as to outlast life.

V

When in 1860 Garibaldi, with his legion of a thousand red-shirted followers, descended like a thunderbolt on Sicily, he scattered like chaff the armies that were opposed to him. The whole world wondered to see that little band sweep through Sicily and up the coast of Italy, putting to flight armies of ten and twenty and even forty thousand men, until the menace of his name was sufficient to spread terror in any force that could be brought against him. And the reason for it was obvious enough. He had so welded together that company in the flame of a fiery, unquenchable loyalty and devotion, that he could wield them like a single blade of steel and none could stand before their dauntless enthusiasm.

Jesus came into the world for a purpose to be achieved in the face of tremendous odds, a purpose lying as clear-cut athwart the worldly aims of men as the path of a searchlight across the night. And the followers he drew to himself he called under terms that were agreeable to such an enterprise. They were fused together in the fires of his own spirit, like Garibaldi's legion, to be wielded like a tried weapon for God's uses in the world. There was simply no place in his company for the dilettante or the trifler. It is a good thing for a merchant to be a dilettante in art; it is a graceful enrichment and decoration of an otherwise prosaic life. But to be a dilettante Christian, a dabbler in the teachings of Jesus, is somehow a contradiction in terms. It is a stark incongruity.

All these passages for the week, laying bare the soul of Jesus in the quivering earnestness of his appeals to men, compel the conclusion that he asked for all or nothing. He did not ask that they should suddenly become saints or theologians, but that they should utterly yield themselves to

him, as those young Italians yielded themselves to Garibaldi, in a personal loyalty and obedience that exulted in the sacrifice. They were very human and very unsatisfactory in many ways; but at this one point, of unselfish devotion to their cause and leader, they were honest and faithful altogether.

The closer one comes to the personality of Jesus, the more does one recognize that character-building under his leadership involves this complete, decisive identification of oneself with him and with his cause. It would be agreeable in certain moods if we could shade off his requirements into such easier terms as permit a partial or tentative acceptance. But it is of no use discussing such a matter; in the plainest terms he repudiated all halfway agreements. There is something in the nature of the case that makes such compromise unthinkable.

Paul has stated the case fairly, as it appealed to him and as it affects any life today, "One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Under the influence of Jesus he found himself becoming a man of one idea —to realize God's calling. In spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, in spite of failure and perplexity and times of spiritual darkness, he would reach the end that God had set before him—to make of himself all that God could make out of a human soul, both in its own development and in the service of men. There is no use in setting any other limit to the gains of character than this—that we should realize all of which our nature gives any promise, in its best and deepest intimations of divine capacities. So great a thing it is to be a Christian.

CHAPTER VII

The Lowliness of Service

DAILY READINGS

On one of those rare occasions when Jesus held the mirror up to his own character, he said of himself, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." At another time he said, to the same purpose, "I am among you as he that serveth." Regarded from any point of view, these are extraordinary utterances for one who called himself Master and Lord. They emphasize a quality of character which, in that old hard world, had seldom been regarded as princely. The pagan world would have termed it, as Nietzsche did in our day, a morality for slaves. But view it as we may, Jesus evidently regarded it as divine. It is conspicuously characteristic of his temper and teaching. It is inseparably interwrought with his ideal for human life, so much so that men have always recognized gentleness of spirit as a distinctive mark of his real followers.

The ideal has been egregiously travestied and set at nought by those who bore his name, but it must always remain inseparable from any genuine Christian character. It has never seemed so divine as it does now, when the want of it on the part of his professed Church has plunged the world in mourning. The men and women of this generation, whose it is to bring the peace of Christ's kingdom on earth as never before, must learn well this lesson of their Master if they would draw men after him. The readings for this week all have to do with this general topic.

Seventh Week, First Day

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. 5: 3-10.

These are undoubted sayings of Jesus. Who but he could ever have uttered words so unworldly, so revolutionary, so intensely spiritual in their outlook? They represent his surest convictions as to human life and character. Christianity can no more forget or disparage these character specifications than a finished building could deny the architect's plans on which it was erected. One may frankly wish for a more martial religion—for the ideals of Thor or Odin —and may turn away in belief and practice from a cult of meekness, lowliness, and gentleness of spirit. But to do so is to discard Christianity. The orthodox creeds of Christendom are mere sounding brass, signifying nothing, if dissevered from these moral qualities. For better or for worse, Christianity must stand by its Founder here or retire from the stage.

And here its Founder stands, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the peacemakers. We may be in a little doubt at first as to just what he means by the meek and poor in spirit. But we can fairly understand them from their opposites—the proud, the arrogant, the domineering. From all such, good Lord deliver us, and deliver our tormented world! Jesus wished to deliver men from the corrosive irritant of pride, that dissolves society and allows no social wound to heal. And what he manifestly asked for was that his followers should be as far as possible like him: not poor-spirited, not abject or cringing—all true orders of nobility have their source in his gallant spirit—but that they should be like forgiven children of their Father. He would have them humble, for their own failures; lowly of heart, as

living in the family of God; gentle, with the gentleness of true privilege and conscious strength. Not like Napoleon, but like Lincoln, as Lincoln became when he had to bear the sorrows of many and drew near his Lord to find the needed strength.

Only the actual companionship of Jesus is likely to make us find our happiness in a temper like his own; to follow him is to find what would otherwise be a closed way.

Seventh Week, Second Day

But all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even the Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.—Matt. 23: 5-12.

The saying of this last verse was apparently often on the lips of Jesus. It is one of his most characteristic utterances. We see through it, as through a window, into his own character; and even more surely we see what he demands of those who would build the structure of their life after his direction. How the Church would have leaped forward into the confidence and affection of men if it had fought for this truth as it has fought, for example, for the doctrine of the eucharist! And in these years now just upon us there will be the sorest need for men and women in whose lives this principle has taken on commanding force.

It is only human nature for us to long to get ahead, to get above our fellows, to rise by them and upon them. There is a subtle delight in feeling ourselves superior to those about us, in having praise and honor at their hands, and being compassed with obsequious attention. We love power and influence, love to have men defer to our superior authority or intelligence. Mere wealth is intoxicating for this very

reason, that it lifts men up above the common crowd, until the sweet incense of respectful observance is always in their nostrils. Much of society, as we know it, is pushing along these lines just as it was in Jesus' day, and men are still selfish and unjust and cruel in their pride and lust of power.

And here Jesus interposes this earnest teaching, so repugnant to human nature, so unworldly, but trailing clouds of glory from the presence of God. It is a bogus greatness that one builds up by pushing and elbowing past his fellows, thanks to his superior advantages and endowments. It leads in the end to humiliation. The only true greatness is the order of God's nobility, and this is built on humble consideration for the legitimate ambitions of others as well as our own.

Seventh Week, Third Day

In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.—Matt. 18: 1-5.

There was something about children that appealed irresistibly to Jesus. He had grown up in the intimacies of a poor home, overrun with little ones. As the oldest brother of James and Joseph and Simon and Judas and their sisters, he must have cared for the ranks of the toddlers through endless days. He had no illusions as to what childhood was, and no airy sentiments about its perfections. And yet when all men were suspicious of him, the children loved him, and in this unfriendly world they were his friends always. He saw in them qualities that he coveted for his disciples, qualities, indeed, that were indispensable if they were to be strong men after his own heart.

What was it he saw in childhood that made him say to the chosen circle of his friends that their only chance of honor with God was in becoming like the little one in his arms? Of course the child was immature and incomplete in every way,

untested and unsure by the side of those weather-beaten men who had already fought through numberless temptations. But one thing a child has, which is just what Jesus longed to see in those grown men. He is unspoiled by the vainglory of life. He is still so humble that he claims nothing for himself of deference and consideration. His loyal affection takes no heed of rank or place or dignity. He clings to a mother dressed in rags as eagerly as he would to a queen of fashion who could pave his path through life with luxuries. He loves without calculation, and lives by simple confidence in those who love him. No kind of service is below his dignity, pride has not yet laid his first generous impulses in irons.

This, at least, we can pray for earnestly for ourselves, that we may grow more childlike with the years, set free from pride and the thirst for the glory of men, and unashamed to serve in humble ways.

Seventh Week, Fourth Day

And they were bringing unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.—Mark 10: 13-16.

It was the stern scholar Jonathan Edwards who prayed "that he might be led as a little child through the wilderness of this world." And this gentle childlike spirit we recognize as perhaps the noblest element in his somber character. Poor old Thomas Carlyle! If only children could have had access to his life to shatter his pompous solemnities and break up the glacial crust that overlay his real tenderness of heart! But he was too much like Peter and John, and many things were hidden from him in consequence.

If it had only been a group of supercilious scholars from Jerusalem who had condescendingly asked to speak with Jesus, Peter would have compassed them with attentions.

But that mothers should bring their babies to break in on high discourse was too ridiculous for words. What had children to do with the greatest rabbi of his time, or with the councils of grave men? Yet, to the mortified surprise of the disciples, Jesus openly avowed a sympathy with the children and the child spirit that was enough to shake confidence in his judgment on the part of all the learned of his nation.

Why did he say that the Kingdom of God was made up of childlike hearts, rather than of the wise and understanding? Because the unspoiled natures of children have the truer wisdom in their confiding trust in love. A child is always ready to be forgiven, to be comforted, to accept fresh kindness, to lean on others' strength and wisdom—neither pride nor suspicion have robbed it of its natural trust in response to pure affection. As we grow sophisticated and self-sufficient, with our tiny acquirement of learning and experience, we tend to harden into an unfilial stiffness toward our Heavenly Father. If we definitely disbelieved in him, discarding as unfounded the faith of Jesus, that would be another matter. But quite without such disbelief we seem to grow too proud to rest upon God's love. We grow cold and distant and formal, we fear to venture much upon the chance of his good will, we make ridiculous pretense of earning what we receive, we become artificial and ceremonious and suspicious of having given offense, we doubt at times if he is much of a Father after all—in a word, we drop the childlike relation almost altogether and drift away, out of sight of its joyous, simple trust in a reasonable but unfathomed love, till we lose all human touch with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May our eyes be opened to understand what his Father meant to Jesus, and how we, too, may live with him confidingly as children, every day.

Seventh Week, Fifth Day

And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The

Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—Luke 18: 9-14.

No doubt there is a warm satisfaction in being as well pleased with oneself as the Pharisee was. It gives men an easy title to lord it over their inferiors, when they are so obviously their betters. The so-called upper classes have rested pleasantly in these manifest rights and prerogatives for many generations. Their complacency has seemed to them only a reasonable recognition of the undoubted facts of life. If God has made them wise and virtuous and respectable, what else could they do but exalt themselves over those who were ignorant and careless and debased? Their very superiority carried with it the manifest right to rule, and incidentally to enjoy all of life's good things, earned for them so largely by the labors of the poor.

Jesus viewed the matter from a curiously different point of view, both morally and economically, that enraged the intellectuals of his time. He saw that this complacent attitude of superiority did something else for the privileged few besides yielding them honor from men: it shut up their hearts to the grace of God. Humility means receptivity, means that one's heart is open to God—wide open to his forgiveness and his mercy. The sense of need is necessary if God is to have a chance to enrich one's life with the true riches. And the same sense of need and humility and childlike gratitude that makes one responsive to God, makes one considerate and gentle toward men. The poor fellow who said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and who went away with something about him of the awe of divine forgiveness and comfort, could hardly after that be proud and overbearing with his neighbor.

To humble ourselves before God in sorrow for our failure and ill-desert, is to make it possible for him to deliver us

from evil and lift us up by the great, silent energies of holy love.

Seventh Week, Sixth Day

Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wouldest thou? She saith unto him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto him, We are able. He saith unto them, My cup indeed ye shall drink: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.—Matt. 20: 20-28.

It was not lowliness for its own sake only that Jesus wished to establish in the characters of his disciples, but for the sake of its fruitfulness in the new Kingdom of God. Pride is anti-social, in Jesus' time or in ours. It separates a man from his fellows, and loosens all the ties of brotherhood. Humility draws men together in mutual sympathy and helpfulness. How we love to exercise authority, to have others work under us and do our will! From the section-boss on the railroad to the captain of industry, or the prime-minister of a government, rich and poor alike covet the chance to get above their fellows. And it is this endless ambition for the sweets of authority that is one of the most obvious disintegrating forces in society, among men or nations.

James and John quite broke up the peace of their little circle, in the eagerness to get ahead of their companions. They were only following the natural impulse to look after

oneself first. But it is an impulse that embitters human life. It is human enough, everybody knows. But that is the trouble—it is too human. It is not enough like God.

Jesus showed them what was divine, what alone was Christian: to forget their itching love of praise and power, in honest thoughtfulness for their companions. Sympathy for others' needs was to beget a real ministry of love. We have talked about this principle in recent years with such a Niagara of words that one almost fears to speak of it, lest it seem a platitude. Yet it is still a principle so novel, so difficult, so wondrously beautiful, that only actual fellowship with God can make it at all prevailing in our lives or in society.

This is what the Church needs above all else—not so much to adopt and proclaim a new social gospel, as to draw near enough to its Master to have the mind of Christ, which will indeed make his Gospel seem like new.

Seventh Week, Seventh Day

Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. . . .

So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.—John 13: 1-5, 12-15.

A lowly spirit is good even as an abstract ideal, but when made visible in human life it is an honorable distinction. To see in the life of a strong man this humble readiness to serve

in lowly and self-forgetting ways, is irresistibly attractive and persuasive. Anyone of us is ready to stand on his dignity and let others do the serving. There is nothing uncommon about that, and nothing attractive. There were strong men in Lincoln's cabinet who knew their worth, every whit of it, and insisted on the fullest measure of deference from all who approached them. They were aristocrats, and allowed none to forget it. But how the world loves Lincoln, as it is coming to know him, who could so forget his dignity and his just rights as to disregard utterly the envy and prejudice of those about him, if only he could better serve the people. It was the same spirit in General Lee which made him beloved by all who knew him.

And how winsomely strength and meekness were blended in the character of Jesus. Here was this matter of the foot-washing, a menial office that had to be performed by someone before they began the feast. Of course it could not be expected of John, the beloved disciple. Peter was above it altogether. The less prominent disciples could not afford to lower themselves by admitting that it was suitable for them. Only one was great enough, and sure enough of his position, to act the servant among them. But Jesus was divine enough to kneel at the feet of each, with basin and towel like a slave, while they looked uneasily at each other and at him. Like society leaders from the newly rich, they were too insecure in their position to derogate anything of their full dignity or to compromise their standing by any humble unconventionality, however useful.

Jesus would have us so sure of ourselves as sons of God that we shall be free, as he was, to serve in any way that we are needed, fearing no loss of caste or honor.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Somewhere along the road of any detailed discussion of the words of Jesus, it is necessary to turn aside for a moment to speak of his Oriental habit in the use of language. He was a Syrian, with Syrian habits of thought and speech, and just as the Syrian of today is widely different from the

American in his way of expressing himself, so we must make allowance in the sayings of Jesus for similar divergencies from Western usage. Not to do so is to misunderstand him at many points. It is to lose sight of the spirit in the letter; and the Western literalist dealing with Oriental imagery, even with the most pious of intentions, is at sea indeed.

The Syrian-born Abraham Rihbany, now of Boston, has made this abundantly plain in his book, "The Syrian Christ." He points out that "just as the Oriental loves to flavor his food strongly and to dress in bright colors, so is he fond of metaphor, exaggeration, and positiveness in speech. To him, mild accuracy is weakness. It is because he loves to speak in pictures and to subordinate literal accuracy to the total impression of an utterance, that he makes such extensive use of figurative language." It needs no argument to show that the language of Jesus in many places is chosen to leave a vivid impression rather than to state a literal fact or lay down the precise form of a command. He was enforcing a truth with impassioned earnestness, but we must look for the truth behind the metaphor—not in the specific wording of the utterance, or the manifest exaggeration of his hyperbole.

To do this is not to dilute the force of his utterances, but simply to understand his meaning; as, for example, in his saying that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. There is no more sense in trying somehow to explain this literally than in taking literally his description of the Pharisees as straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel. His meaning is clear in either case, but it is not the surface meaning of the words. We can see this clearly also in his injunction, "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee." The lustful thought would not be so easily cast out, even if both one's eye-sockets were empty; and it is not self-mutilation that Jesus is advising.

In the readings for this week we have the bidding, "Call no man your father on the earth; for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven." It cannot be his purpose to forbid a child's calling his father, "Father," or a servant's speaking of his master. He is putting vividly and forcefully the warning against ministering to pride by adulation and the heaping

up of titles. We remember how he said that unless a man hated his father and mother and even his own life, he could not be his disciple. No Occidental would ever have made that statement, and to his first thought it is repellent. To a Syrian its meaning is obvious, as the superlative demand for loyalty to the Master, above all competing demands that could possibly conflict.

Of the same sort is the bidding, "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," and other commands associated with it, forbidding resistance to evil. Taken literally, they present a course not only anti-social—hurtful to the interests of others—but inconsistent with any wise love or constructive benevolence. We must interpret them as honestly as we can in harmony with Jesus' unmistakable teaching and example exhibited elsewhere. At every stage of New Testament interpretation this principle must be kept in mind.

Some will be inclined to say, Is there not in this a danger of refining away our Lord's words and so evading their real significance? Certainly there is a danger, as in all honest independent use of our own judgment. We may possibly make mistakes of interpretation. But in the other case, there is not only a possibility but a certainty that we shall go wrong. And so we have no choice but to think for ourselves what our Lord really meant. Literalism is not for honest people, but for the timid and indolent and careless. And if it be objected further that if we once begin such critical treatment of Jesus' sayings we shall not know where to stop, we can only answer that this in a measure is true, but that the danger is inseparable from honest search for truth anywhere along the line. If we are to keep to sharply drawn limits within which no error is possible, it can only be by leaning on the authority of others in the acceptance of tradition. There is in these days no way to save ourselves the trouble of thinking or the responsibility for decision, if we are to be honest seekers for the mind of Christ.

II

The Christian religion can never break away from its humble origins, though it has often tried to do so. Its ideals of life and character can never travel far from him who was

meek and lowly in heart. This is not so much because he was born in a stable or executed as a criminal. Both of these things can be so softened by sentiment as to be comparatively unobjectionable, even to the proud and masterful. But it is not so easy to get away from the fact that his hands were calloused by the common labor of a workingman, that the only home he ever knew was the crowded peasant cottage of the poor, noisy with children and without convenience or privacy, and that he was derided and despised even in his own day as one who never had the gentleman's training of the schools.

His lowliness of temper showed itself further, as he came to the place where his powerful gifts and his popularity enabled him to choose any social backing he preferred. Instead of selecting for his friends men who would have brought him the prestige or worldly standing that he lacked, he picked out those who relentlessly held him down to the humble level whence he sprang—fishermen, peasants, publicans—men of the common people. He deliberately consorted, not with the religious or scholarly circles of his time, as he might have done, but with the despised mass of the poor and ignorant and even the "undesirable citizens" of that day. His tastes led him to pay much attention to those who could bring no sort of help to the movement he was trying to found—children and women and sick, even lepers and beggars and obvious outcasts. He went out of his way to show that he had more sympathy for humble and penitent wastrels, broken by life's hardships, than he had for those who proudly knew themselves to be the pillars of Judaism. He seemed to take with utmost seriousness such an Old Testament saying as that which declared of the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite."

In this respect his life was all of a piece throughout, from his cradle among the cattle to the grave hastily opened in charity to hide the dishonored body. And all his teaching was such as might be expected from one who chose for himself, at his Father's will, such lowly conditions as were representative of the vast mass of humanity. If any man

chooses to shape his life after the ideals of Jesus, from now to the end of time he will have to choose a life that rather forgets itself for the good of others than seeks to be refined and enriched at their expense. It may be a life of leadership, possibly of power and authority among the people; but even in the place of privilege the servant will aim to be like his Master, and this will make him still the beloved servant of men. All his life will be infiltrated by the love of God, and this will make him loving and gentle in his turn, hating arrogance and fearing the insidious poison of self-sufficiency and pride.

III

It has always been a grievance with some that Jesus did not lay greater stress on the more masculine and self-assertive virtues—courage, firmness, gallantry, and other qualities denoting energy and leadership. It may be said in answer that Jesus emphasized what needed to be emphasized with those to whom he spoke. It would have been another matter if he had been addressing a people of gentler nature, like the Burmese or the Hawaiians. But the Jews were a truculent people, good haters, fierce and vindictive, trained to despise all others as inferiors. The other races of his time were little better. The Greeks and Romans at the height of their culture were exquisitely selfish and cruelly contemptuous of the unfortunate. The barbarians were frankly barbaric. No wonder that even the personal disciples of Jesus quarreled for preeminence. It was in the air they breathed. So it was a new principle that Jesus introduced into the moral atmosphere, and, although men have been breathing it for nineteen centuries, still it is a strange teaching.

How abruptly it runs athwart the principle of development, as it has been working these unknown ages in animal life in the struggle for existence! All about us creatures rise by the assertion of strength at the expense of their fellows, and even in us men the animal struggles fiercely to do the same. As Huxley said, the whole course of organic evolution has no ethical suggestion "except that man must try to go on the opposite tack." We are beginning to see very clearly in these days that men must go on the opposite tack indeed, if society is ever to be delivered from peril of destruction. But

Jesus emphasized it to those fiercely proud fellow-countrymen of his, so long ago. After the tide of human life had set persistently for millenniums in a contrary direction, he declared that to spend and be spent for others was the highest success in life. In his own career he showed how one who was meek and lowly in heart might achieve a world leadership, by the side of which the power of imperial Rome sank away into insignificance.

IV

Men have not realized how vital an element this principle is in the Christian religion. Correct belief has bulked so largely in their thought, that gentleness of heart and lowliness of mind have sometimes been almost lost from sight. Yet they are vital to the character commended by Jesus. Not many years were needed to show how vital a principle of life it was, mighty to the casting down of strongholds. Influential men might ridicule it, then as now; but it was the real thing in the Christian religion, not the only real thing, but real with the fundamental reality and power of goodness.

Jesus meant what he said. His morality, his religion, could only live and grow on lines like these. As it became rich and strong and proud and domineering it began to fail and fade, even though its head called himself the servant of the servants of God. And equally have the years shown that by spending itself the Church of Christ has increased. The bush burns but it is not consumed. The martyrs perish, in Rome or Uganda or Shansi, and the seed springs up and grows a hundredfold.

In early Rome the senators and patricians drove in their chariots along the streets—proud, powerful, supreme—they and their beautiful womenkind, the conscious rulers of the world. Beneath their feet, underground in the dark, almost within sound of the rumble of their chariot wheels, were the little rabble of the Christians, slaves and runaways and reformed outcasts, Jews and Africans and barbarians, worn, haggard men and women whom Rome spurned. But patrician Rome in its power and purple is now only a matter for antiquarian research, and the despised company of the Catacombs holds the world's future in its hands, because of the imperishable vitality of humble love that ministers and serves and

spends itself, and leaves the result to God. It is Jesus who points out the way to greatness for the men of today, and not the would-be superman.

V

In the very nature of the moral world there is a necessity for this requirement in Christian discipleship. It is not a novel principle, emphasized and exploited by Jesus, but unrelated to the eternal and unchanging realities of the moral universe. It roots itself in and flowers out of one central fact, from which it is inseparable, and Jesus clearly so related it when he used the words, "even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." This central fact is, that God is like that. The eternal reality is a reality of redeeming love, spending itself to save. This was the constructive conviction of Jesus' life. If men are to be in harmony with it, they, too, must come into the same fellowship of self-forgetting helpfulness. It was God who was in Christ giving himself to human need. Apart from this truth, the infinite value and dynamic of this principle fade away.

Who was this Jesus who gives the world these new strange lessons in character, illustrating them by his own life and death? If he was only another martyr in the dark, going willingly to execution rather than deny what he supposed to be the truth, then he was only another witness to the appalling helplessness of man to save himself and his fellows from the dominating cruelty of successful force. But if the eternal God chose this way to reveal himself, to show the incredible reality of his love for men in need, and if Jesus knew that God's truth and love were in him to conquer sin and deliver men, then we know where we are in the universe—that neither death nor hell can prevail against us, because God is for us; and that love and only love is the conquering power that in the end shall subdue all things to itself.

Because Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation and gave himself for men, he that would be great must needs come into the succession of the sons of God and truly live as a servant of men. It is the necessity of an eternal law of life, manifesting itself in the life and death of Jesus, because it expresses the eternal reality of our Father. These

are great words and would indeed be unpardonably presumptuous, except that they are the foundation on which the life of our Lord arose.

Outside the radius of this fact—the self-giving of Jesus—this great principle of lowly service slowly withers and dies, as it dies in India or China or Germany today, outside the personal rule and fellowship of Jesus. Men do not long live this life of service apart from their Lord and Saviour. They may struggle on awhile, by strength of inherited impulse; but either their efforts to serve will bring them inevitably to him, the Great Servant, or the life will wither and die away, in one generation or in two. If we are to live the Christ life, of which all agree to speak so well, we must do it as he did, with heart wide open to our Father's love. As the Father's mercy cheers our lives from day to day, we shall be able to carry on his mercy to our fellows.

CHAPTER VIII

Evils That Lay Waste Life

DAILY READINGS

We have no ordered treatise on ethics from the lips of Jesus. The evils that lay waste character and rob life of its beauty and joy are nowhere dealt with by him in detail one by one. But several of them he singled out for special reprobation, because of their hurtfulness and all but universal prevalence. They may not be what we would first have thought of; but any character patterned after Jesus will have need to give serious and prayerful heed to his warning, lest it be entangled by the deceitfulness of these evils. Three of these are considered in the readings for this week—anxiety, covetousness, and impurity. The first may not seem to be on a par with the others in its hurtfulness, but only one who has lived past middle age can have any idea how heavily its blight lies on the later years of life, or how it makes havoc of the victorious life of the spirit.

Eighth Week, First Day

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? . . . Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added

unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.—Matt. 6: 24, 25, 31-34.

Perhaps we all begin by regarding these verses about anxiety as furnishing good advice rather than an imperative command. The matter seems somehow too incidental and unimportant to be put on the same footing with the graver moral and religious duties that are treated before and after it. But as years pass, we come to see that this is no incidental or unimportant matter; but that Jesus, with his sympathetic knowledge of the lives of men, was warning them against a danger as real and hurtful as hatred or hypocrisy. Indeed, for most of us, this command, "Be not anxious," is of more consequence than the two solemn enactments of the law, "Thou shalt not kill," and "Thou shalt not steal." Heredity and training and convention all combine to shield us from temptation to these latter. But what save our own enlightened will shall keep us from devastating our powers by preoccupation with coming needs and troubles? Just as fear paralyzes bodily functions, so it paralyzes the noblest powers of the soul. Fear of poverty, of ill-health, of loneliness, of temptation, of failure in a hundred forms—it not only darkens the blue sky that should be above us, but filches from us our power of helping in God's kingdom bravely and strongly as we ought to help. Depressed and self-absorbed, we rob others of the contribution we well might make to the common welfare and joy.

The purpose of Jesus was not simply to set the lives of his disciples free from a heavy shadow and burden. Certainly he had that purpose. No Christian Scientist of today is more in earnest than was he to bring men into the freedom and joyousness of an unclouded peace. But the connection shows that Jesus was thinking of the Kingdom of God and its long fight against the serried forces of evil. He longed to set men free from self-absorbed preoccupation with personal worries, for whole-hearted efficiency in God's service. No man can serve two masters, he said. If worry over material comforts is to stay with us day and night, or secret fear of coming sorrow, then it is of little use that we shall be for God's purposes. We spoil not only our own joy, but any

first-rate contribution we might have made to the new kingdom of righteousness and joy and peace among men.

O Lord, grant us thy peace. Teach us how to fight a good fight against the inroads of care and anxiety, of fear and self-pity and depression, and give us the joy of victory all along the way until life's end.

Eighth Week, Second Day

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household! Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the house-tops. And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.—Matt. 10: 24-31.

Even character of the highest type, as with so noble a spirit as Amiel, can be sapped and weakened and made fruitless by the irresolution and ineffectiveness that come from fear—not from the groundless pathological fears of disordered nerves, but from an imagination over-sensitive to the real ills of life, and to the limitations of one's own deficiencies. To distrust oneself too far is almost as hurtful as to distrust God. To be compelled to act and choose continually when tormented by the sense of one's own insufficiency and the cruel uncertainty of life's chances, is to lead a life hesitant and clouded, shorn of the calm fortitude of a true disciple of Jesus. Nothing great can come of it. The qualities of wise, strong leadership are not to be found in it.

Just because Jesus asks for the qualities of greatness and leadership in his disciples, he demands a fearless optimism and points out the way to its attainment. He would have them rest, as he rested, on the loving care of a Heavenly

Father. He did not gloss over or seek to minimize the limitations of imperfect character or the unkindly chances of this world. How could he, who was himself a Man of Sorrows? "In the world ye have tribulation," he said. But he bade them trust in the wise compassion of God, who knew their circumstances utterly and who would overrule all seeming evil to their good. No blow of evil fortune could come to them as a blind, insensate injury, but only as something to be used for them constructively by a Father's love—as was true of the harsh wrongs done to Jesus. He demands this quiet, trustful self-possession if men are to follow him.

O Lord, help me to see thy love in the dark cloud as well as in the sunshine. May I be sure that in life and death I am in the hollow of thy hand.

Eighth Week, Third Day

And one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.—Luke 12: 13-21.

No one will doubt that Jesus has touched upon an almost universal weakness in his warning against covetousness. All about us it is blasting the possibilities of high character every day. It is one of the compelling human appetites, like hunger or thirst. It operates in Chicago just as it did among the patriarchs who kept their flocks and herds in the desert.

An ordinarily ambitious man can hardly help longing for the pleasures and privileges that wealth alone can bring—leisure, travel, refining influences of every sort, and all the endless catalogue of things that gratify the senses. Sometimes it seems as though it were of no more use to forbid ourselves to covet than it would be to forbid ourselves to be hungry. How fiercely and how naturally we want the things that money would put within our reach, that yet we cannot get! And yet Jesus says uncompromisingly, "Keep yourselves from all covetousness."

Evidently it can be done. Jesus did it. Men and women without number have done it ever since. Most of the great helpers of humanity have done it, scientists like Darwin and Pasteur as truly as saints like Bernard and Francis, but it is only accomplished, as Bushnell said, by the expulsive power of a new affection. The mere negative prohibition is not sufficient. But a positive love for what God would set us to do has always proved enough to still the gnawing restlessness of selfish desire, and draw us into contented fellowship with him in the work of his kingdom. It is in the truest sense satisfying to be rich toward God, even though poverty may give some heart-aches along the way. The poor fellow with the many barns and many goods never caught a glimpse of how good it was to rest in what his Father would count riches.

To be in fact a friend and follower of Jesus is to have one's character more and more purged of the itching craving for the good things fortune brings to others.

Eighth Week, Fourth Day

But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.—1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto

them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished exceedingly, saying unto him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God.—Mark 10: 23-27.

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Jesus had no quarrel with riches as such, like a modern Bolshevik. He was concerned with the heart and its affections. He was trying to lead men into large-hearted ways, worthy of children of the Father, and he found money one of their worst entanglements. And he is neither telling a secret or uttering a threat when he says that riches make it hard for a man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a matter of fact and commonest observation. We do not have to be moralists to see the enormous difference between the people whose heart is set on riches and those whose heart is set on doing God's will in the world. One has only to look in their faces or listen to their voices to read something of the contrast. The man or woman whose chief aim is money or its equivalent is steadily looking down; the man whose chief aim is one of love finds his gaze more and more drawn upward, in spite of all the mists and vapors life can breed.

The mere possession of money, of course, does not determine the way one's dearest ambition sets. A Russian anarchist may be as cruelly greedy and selfish as a Prussian junker, as all have seen. And yet the mere possession of wealth tends to center one's affection where all this potential power and pleasure lie, in heaps of gold. The man who earned it may be of a Spartan simplicity of life and unworldliness of aim. But by the second or third generation the fatal tendency to selfishness and pride is too likely to assert itself, like a poison in the blood, dulling the vision of highest things.

It is in early life that the warning should sound loudest in our ears. Then, if ever, is the time of generous idealism. And if in those years our heart is covetous of what money brings, checking our impulse to dedicate ourselves unselfishly

to the need of others, our soul shrivels with the long life-choice of what is beneath the best.

The life of Jesus was one of unselfish love. It is of no use even to talk of Christian character save as we are willing to be drawn into a heart sympathy with him, with all it may cost in the choosing of a life-career.

Eighth Week, Fifth Day

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment, and she poured it upon his head, as he sat at meat. But when the disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. But Jesus perceiving it said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.—Matt. 26: 6-13.

This is as far from covetousness as the east is from the west. We seem to be in a different world from that of the man who wanted a good time for himself for many years. Here is one who has forgotten about herself as completely as Jesus forgot himself for others in those last days of life. And it is interesting to see how Jesus reacted to such an exhibition of character. We can read his will as surely by what he approves as by what he rebukes. And here was a case where he gratefully approved with his whole heart.

What she did had in it the very opposite of greed. It illustrates how the demon of covetousness may be exorcised and utterly overthrown in a human spirit. It was the work of love. There may have been a time when this Mary would have looked long and lovingly at a shining pile of three hundred silver denarii on a table, meaning so many hours of gratification. But now they were as nothing to her in comparison with her devotion to him who had brought her

to God. He was despised and forsaken of men; they were hunting his life at that moment; well, she would show him the uttermost honor she could compass. At other times she could honor him in other ways—by helping his poor, for example. But at this perilous moment, when black hatred overhung them all, she must show her proud loyalty and unmeasured gratefulness, without reckoning the cost. Money could have no better use.

It was like a cup of cold water to one parched with thirst, and Jesus commended her royally. He lets us see what God honors, a generosity that forgets itself in love, a character in which hungry appetite is mastered by the highest impulse. The appetite seems to be in us all, slumbering perhaps, but easily roused into hot desire. *But equally near us are tides of a divine life and love, to which we may open our hearts until we, even we, begin to think not in terms of personal gain but in the high values of the glory of God.*

Eighth Week, Sixth Day

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. . . . Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell.—Matt. 5:8, 27-30.

If we are to follow the teaching of Jesus at this point, we shall find ourselves in flat contradiction with the impatient voice of the world. ' People say that it is only the doctrines of Christianity to which the world has grown indifferent, and that for the ethical teaching of Jesus it has nothing but admiration. Would that this were true! It is not. And nowhere does the harsh discordance between his will and that of the polite world appear more sharply than in this matter of keeping the heart pure. Nowhere is the strain on character today more severe.

Jesus was no ascetic. He believed in a rich, full life, sensitively responsive to every source of joy, brimful of natural human satisfactions. But to be human and natural meant, to him, to be true to our divine lineage as those "made in the image of God." The more perfectly one answered in spirit to his Father's spirit, the more truly human and natural he was, the richer his life, the greater his joy. His life and its satisfactions were not narrowed, but ran far out into the infinite and eternal, so that as yet it did not even appear what he should be.

A large element in the most popular art and literature of our day in all Christian lands tells us that we should be human and natural above all, fearlessly and without apology, that we should live out our complete selves. But as the animal impulse of ape and tiger is still strong in us, to be natural is to be something far different from the man or woman of Jesus' thought. Perhaps the tiger has few apologists in these days. But the ape is in high favor—its horrid leer peeps out at us from how many of the books and plays and pictures of our time! Of course it claims to be all in the way of an untrammeled art, a generous revolt from prudery and hypocrisy! But it amounts to an endless solicitation to the very thoughts and desires that wither the life of God in one's heart, as poison gas withers the roses in a chateau garden. Jesus said, "If thine eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee." And this he said, not because he was a prude or a kill-joy, but because to him God meant *everything;* and to lose sight of God, with the self-styled Bohemian, was not jolly life, but a dread injury, fruitful of loss and deepening disappointment.

O Lord, help me to think this matter through to a conclusion of the will. May I highly resolve to abhor and shun, all my life long, every needless incitement to evil thought, that my heart may be pure and strong for such service as thou hast for me to do.

Eighth Week, Seventh Day

And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? trying him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses

command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh: so that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.—Mark 10: 2-9.

You can pretty well judge the nobility of a man's character by his thought about marriage, if only you can find it out. We do, in fact, justly rate the moral advancement of a nation by its attitude to women. The social stratum in which marriage and the whole sexual relation are a perennial jest, on the stage or off, is a stratum of corruption. In proportion as the words mother, wife, and sister stand for sacred associations held in reverent esteem, do we rise toward our true estate as members of our Father's household.

We are not concerned here with Jesus' specific teaching as to divorce, but with his unmistakable attitude to the whole problem of the relation between men and women. He lifts it up at once out of the muddy associations with which humanity had soiled it, and holds it in a setting of divine light, glorified. It is an ideal estimate, to be sure, but not less true. He was no hermit, ignorant of what the life of the people really meant. He grew up in a home, with his mother and his sisters always at his side. He had heard from childhood the characteristic neighborhood gossip of a Syrian village. Both good and evil had displayed themselves before his eyes. And, after all, he utterly repudiates and forbids any thought of the home less than one divinely noble—the thought of his Father. Both men and women are the children of God, and those whom love brings together in the sacred fellowship of marriage are made one by their Father. The glory of the goodness of God is brought nearer to them by their love, even though it has to win its triumphs patiently and out of much infirmity.

To many in our day, steeped in the thought of a decadent society and literature, this may seem purest moonshine. But it is a vision of truth, a vision of life's glory, that is always

dawning anew on human sight, and that redeems life from sordid commonness. Jesus bids men to look out through his eyes; to break free from the base, defiling selfishness and sensuality of their time; and to stand with him for better hopes for society than men yet can realize—not petting and humoring such animal instincts as may still be quick within them, as decadent genius would have us do, but claiming their high estate as children of the Most High.

O God our Saviour, thou canst do for us and in us what we have tried in vain to do for ourselves. Give us an early victory over all that stains and shames, that we may have a long workday unspoiled by the things that cut us off from Thee, our strength.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Sooner or later we come to realize how great is the strain on character due to life's anxieties. No one can fully anticipate how insidiously but how threateningly the strain arises to cripple our energies and entangle us in self-absorption. The shadow of it hardly falls across our early days, except as we are tempted occasionally to indulge in a fit of the blues, more by way of self-indulgence than from real trouble of spirit. The resilience and buoyancy of youth carry us on hopefully, even when, as in the recent storm of war, all the contingencies of suffering and death suddenly open up before us. It is when our reserves of vitality and nervous force begin to be depleted, when the rebound to health and good spirits no longer follows so quickly or so surely on the heels of sickness or disappointment, that we realize how Christian character demands genuine courage and firm optimism, daily renewed from deep springs of strength and reassurance.

The light-heartedness that comes from natural high spirits and overflowing health is an inexpressible blessing, but how many of us have watched it die down like the flame of a candle going out for lack of oil! The cares of business and professional life, the responsibilities of home and children, the failure of early ambitions, and the gradual oncoming of

losses and limitations that will at least never grow less, the intractable sorrows and wrongs of society about us—in a hundred ways "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world" begins to wear upon our spirit. The more sensitive and generous one's temper, the more vulnerable it is to this invasion of its equanimity.

Jesus understood this problem of our human life with a deep and penetrating sympathy. He knew how many hopeful lives were frayed away by the mere wear and tear of anxieties unwisely born. He had been in too many homes, listened to too many querulous tongues, seen too many faces deep-lined with trouble, to be in any doubt about the dangers and temptations that come from leaving one's spirit open to the fret of adverse circumstances. He knew that any noble character, if it is to last through a burdened life and yet be a steadying, cheering force for others, must itself be steadied and cheered by an ever-renewed trust in God.

First of all, he gives us the philosophy of wise common sense. "Be not anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." As a matter of commonest observation and experience, we weary ourselves with climbing mountains of difficulty to which we never actually come. The worst ills are those of anticipation. The actual emergency somehow brings with it a certain reenforcement and stiffening of spirit, sufficient for the need. But the imagined and foretasted evils are the ones whose ceaseless, dragging burden wears out one's endurance and spoils the passing days. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. 33:25) is an old, true promise on which multitudes have rested and found it fulfilled. But nowhere is strength promised to enable us today to bear tomorrow's burden, with an added load of anxious concern for a long vista of days and years to come. A strong, helpful character must husband its own resources economically, not waste them in selfish useless fears for the future. And Jesus demanded this firm, reasonable self-restraint on the part of his disciples, so that they might give their entire force to the business of the hour.

But it is not only on this shrewd common sense that he relies to enforce his command. He grounds it, as he does all his commands, on the realities of God's will. "Your

Father knows" is the conviction on which he bids them rest, as on a pillow for weary heads at night. He evidently has the most perfect confidence that the God who clothes the flower and cares for the sparrow is watchful and solicitous for the good of his children, so that men, sharing this conviction, may truly rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him, even when things go wrong. Of course, what he is solicitous to secure for his children is not the richest food and the most expensive clothing, it is not the greatest possible amount of ease and comfort, and the least possible acquaintance with strain and hardship. He would be a poor Father were he as fondly weak as that. He knows what we need, to bring out the best that is in us—not only the best for thirty years of business life here and now, but the best for all our unmeasured capacities that reach out into the unknown.

Even here in this world of cruel forces and evil men, he is concerned, if we will let him, to make all things work together for our good, as he did for his Son, Jesus. So that, if we believe this, we may stop worrying over the future, may even be like those of whom it was said long ago, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. 26:3). Jesus not only held this out as a privilege, but even solemnly enjoined it on his disciples as a duty. It is part of any strong, true character, he said, by trustful peace to save its energies from waste.

II

Nothing in the range of human experience is better assured as a fact and not a fancy, than this freedom from paralyzing fears for those who trust in the God of Jesus. Most of all was it evident in the life of Jesus himself. If anyone will sit down and rapidly read His life-story with this in mind, he will be impressed anew with the marvellous self-mastery of our Lord in the face of pitiless, overhanging tragedy.

Most of us know something of the tense strain of overwrought apprehension, such as comes when we face some approaching pain or sorrow, like that of a surgical operation. The shadow of it, many days in advance, makes it difficult for us to break away from our self-absorption in the pros-

pect, or to give our undivided attention to our friends. What it must be in the case of a criminal awaiting death, we do not like to think. Jesus saw vividly before him the shame and torture and loneliness and death, overhanging all and advancing relentlessly day by day. His sensitive spirit must have suffered under it more keenly than we can measure. But even up to the last night, "having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end." To read the story of that last evening, with its quiet thoughtfulness of affection for his friends, is to wonder at his calm, all threaded through with peace and joy. He was not numbed with the chill of fear; he was not even anxious for the morrow. All that there was of him was at his disposal still for his Father's work. There was no wastage. When the moment came, and the onset of it in the lonely night swept him into the deep waters, he struggled desperately as any son of man had ever done, and struggled through, with his Father's help, to peace and self-mastery again, to live out those last grim hours in faith and love. But though he was a Man of Sorrows, he lived through all his years under the blue sky of his Father's comprehending purpose and sympathy.

No one can doubt that, to him, this confidence in a Father in the face of a stormy world means everything or nothing for human life. It is not to be taken, like occasional doses of soothing medicine, at times of acute mental disturbance when some sort of quieting influence is clearly indicated as desirable. If Jesus was mistaken in his lifelong conviction as to the reality of a personal God and Father, then obviously, if we are honest, we shall have nothing to do with the comfort of any overruling Power, wiser and more loving than our earthly parents. It is not for us, even though it may have been the consoling light behind the dark for ages. But if Jesus was right, if his trust in God was not a treacherous delusion, then what does it not mean to those who take his word as truth! Today and tomorrow, through lonely years or sickness, in death as well as in joy, and illimitably beyond death's brief interruption, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" So that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear."

This great, sustaining buttress of a courageously unselfish

character, the only Christian character, rests squarely on faith. It was a faith that in the case of Jesus, where it was applied, so to speak, with a hundred per cent of efficiency, worked out into the supremely perfect life—the crowning development in human evolution. Jesus bids us to be without fear, to go in peace, by virtue of this same faith. Judging by its fruits, these nineteen hundred years, we may safely venture to claim for ourselves the fearlessness and courage of a quiet heart.

III

"What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose or forfeit his own self?" That is the way Jesus sums up the whole argument between covetousness and love. As always, he is thinking of the great future—or the endless present—of one whom God has made for Himself. What conceivable abundance of things could one gather about himself here for a few years, that would counterbalance in its satisfactions the blank loss of himself and his very capacity for joy? Of course, when it is put as Jesus put it, the question is unanswerable. Life is what we all want, and not a pile of heavy baggage that we can carry only half way on our journey. As Jesus said unanswerably, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

And yet while Jesus' argument is for most of us thoroughly unanswerable, how few it has convinced in practice, from that far-off day to this! Probably more people are yielding assent to it today than ever in the world before, because so many have ceased to be satisfied with conventional religion and are seeking earnestly to know what Jesus himself really wanted men to do. The traditional religion of the creeds yields at best a rather dubious sociological program; but the religion of Jesus goes straight as an arrow to its mark, in fundamental social questions. He lived a life and taught a life that gives covetousness hardly a foothold or a handhold in human character. His scale of values is such that one who honestly follows after him is looking in quite a different direction from that of money-making. To be sure, he will have to make money if he is to live; he will have to put energy into his work, also; and if he does this he is likely

to get ahead in the race. He may even have as his special aim the winning of wealth for the unselfish uses of the Kingdom. But he cannot breathe the same spiritual air as Jesus, or look out on the same horizons, and yet live for the sake of piling up possessions, especially at the expense of others. The spirit of his Master and of his Father are in him, and what that spirit is, the life and death of Jesus clearly show.

Now the world of today is groping in almost an agony of desire for anything that can really overthrow the power of greed and envy and suspicion. There is no hope in autocratic militarism; there is just as little hope at the opposite end of the scale in anarchistic socialism. Both lead to chaos and death. The people of China, as much as those of Russia or Austria, are just now in the acutest need of some power that can make justice and benevolence actually triumphant in the State, and France and America and Italy also can find their ultimate social salvation only in deliverance from the cruel covetousness of men, whether bourgeois or proletarian.

Jesus alone opens this door of hope on mankind, not only because he gave himself unreservedly to the glorious ministry of love, but because he dedicates all his followers—all the men and women and children who should ever hear his words and do them—to the same life of obedience to their Father's will. He does not suddenly make them all saints, because we are what we are, intractable stuff at best for divine uses, but he opens their eyes at once to a new range of values and a new standard of ambitions.

IV

In the common room of Magdalene College, Cambridge, two portraits hang on the wall, facing each other across the table, portraits of two men who shared the zest of life to the fullest and who fought hard for life's prizes. One is of Pepys—sleek, satisfied, kindly, sensuous; a man who cheerfully tried to skim the cream off life's surface for himself and measurably succeeded. The other is of Charles Kingsley, who also delighted in life beyond most men, but whose heart burned like a flame in sympathy with the wrongs

and sorrows of the poor, and who gave himself like his Master in generous devotion to all who needed him. And his face, lined with love and pain, is of one who looked ineffably far beyond the getting and spending of life's pleasures.

It is not so much that one man had a different philosophy from the other, though this was true, as that one man lived in the closest contact with the spirit of Jesus and the other instinctively avoided any contact with him more intimate than that of formal religion. But the world today, in its present mood, recognizes in good-natured Pepys the despair of society and in Charles Kingsley, with all his limitations, the power that can lift it out of its despair.

Jesus directed men's attention away from the slow accumulation of property to the life that satisfies. He actually persuaded them that for one to be rich toward God was to be the happy man and fortunate. To lay up treasure in heaven by love and service was to have one's thoughts stealing away to God, instead of to the safe-deposit vault and the greetings in the marketplace. He made men feel that in the family of God we are all dependent upon one another for our true development, and our interests bind us closely together and to Him.

It is not good for a man to be freed from this sense of a genuine interdependence of friendly, mutual responsibility and obligation. But one of the first and most obvious effects of wealth is to isolate a man from his fellows. It not only makes them look at him with envy or suspicion, but it tends to make him feel himself their superior, and to show, it may be unconsciously, the masterfulness or the condescension of the man of power toward one who is the mere pawn of industry. His wife and daughters speedily become too refined to notice socially the womenfolk of a workingman, such as Jesus was, and in a space of time ridiculously short—much less than a generation—a gulf is fixed between the man with money and the man with only a laborer's wages.

One of the great lessons of the War, never to be unlearned, has shown how quickly and how naturally men of different social standing are drawn together in brotherly friendship in the trenches, where the adventitious inequalities of wealth and family are suddenly removed. Thousands of

young fellows in the ranks, who otherwise would never have exchanged more than an indifferent stare, have come to feel in the presence of common duty or danger the genuine brotherhood of all brave true hearts. It has been a revelation at once of our common kinship in God's family, and of the cruel artificialities of a society disordered by undue respect for wealth.

The Christian character, so far as it is Christian, shares the mind of its Master at this point. It perceives without argument that it must be free from that love of money that lays waste the kingdom of God on earth. Jeers of ironical laughter might well salute such a statement were it made concerning the visible Church. In many lands the love of money has well-nigh made its very name a mockery. What Christendom has been, all men know! Nevertheless, the ancient words of the Master still sound clear. The fiery message of his love and of his cross has not changed by a hair's breadth from its first trumpet-call for self-denial because God himself is love. Whenever the thoughts of men come back humbly and obediently to Jesus Christ, they find him still waiting to deliver society from the curse of covetousness, summoning all mankind to the life of genuine brotherhood.

The time of fierce testing is now close upon the Church once more. The millions from the camps and trenches are coming back among us, to take up the old lines of business and industrial life. But they will never take them up with full acceptance of the old order, where the privileges and opportunities go as a matter of right to the children of the well-to-do, and the grinding monotony of the factory and the tenement remains as a matter of course the inheritance of the poor. Never again will it be a matter of course, as it has been. And our Lord waits, as it were, to see how his followers will help on the better day—whether they will help it on at all, or will resent even the suggestion that the children of the "hunky" and the "dago" should have an equal opportunity with their own. There will be bitterness and folly on both sides. It will be easy to lose patience and to lose hope. All sorts of leadership in the contest will break down, from that of Karl Marx to the latest doctrinaire. But the leadership of love will not break down nor fail its fol-

lowers, and that perfect leadership is found in deed and in truth in Jesus Christ.

V

If one would have a reason why real Christianity is not more popular in the world, he will find one of the reasons in the uncompromising demand of Jesus for purity of life and thought. His ideal of character in this respect is not that of the average man on the street, nor of the world of art and letters in our day or any other. It precipitates one into the old warfare between culture and self-restraint. Jesus demands a self-restraint that for many a man of ardent temperament must be inflexible as iron, if it is to serve its purpose. He would have a man remember, not, apologetically and excusingly, that his physical ancestors are not long down off the tree, but, proudly and confidently, that the Father of his spirit is God, and that he must somehow get through God's world with all its bewilderingly voluptuous appeals cleanly and honorably, for his own sake, and his brother's sake, for the sake of his sister, too, and for the sake of God.

This means that he must have certain set principles and habits of mind and action that are sternly unyielding. It means that, knowing himself, and knowing the type of appeals and suggestions that pierce like arrows, that burn like fire, that rob him of his self-control, he should make it the unflinching habit of his life to avoid them so far as he may reasonably do. It means that he should not deliberately subject himself to temptation, but make a resolute and unwavering fight, lifelong if need be, against the influences that corrupt and shame and unfit him for the high-souled, keen endeavor that he ought to be able to render to his Lord.

In doing this he will find that he has turned to breast a current of popular opinion so overwhelming as to be well-nigh irresistible. By some of the highest and most intellectual as well as by some of the lowest and basest elements in modern society, he will find himself assailed with stinging epithets, as Jesus was—fool and fanatic, Philistine, Puritan, and prude; he will wonder whether he is really playing the game, or whether he is running away from what no all-round man should try to shun. The devil will come to him and whisper that to the pure all things are pure, even when

the salacious play at which he is asked to look fairly drips with indecency.

Only one thing will unfailingly steady him and keep him true at every stage of the long fight, and that is the sight of Jesus, and an honest acceptance of his ideals. Then he will always have before him the true glory of a man—not the base, pinchbeck culture of the man of the world, who has seen life and knows it all, the culture that for all its emancipation leads down and back again to the long night from which society has been emerging, but the glory of him who overcomes one of our fiercest enemies, and by so much helps to make life sweet and sacred and by his clean manhood gives courage to the faint. Jesus came that men might have life—not the night life of a great city, that bubbles and festers in the dark, but the life that flows pure from its source in God, and flows on in turn, as Jesus said, in rivers of living water from the man who believes in him,

It is true that in the old, evil days of decadent Rome, when Christianity was still at close grips with heathenism, society was full of evils shocking for a sensitive soul to see; and many of the truest disciples of Jesus thought to follow him better by shunning altogether the sights and sounds that appealed clamorously to the senses. This they could do only by quitting society altogether. And they became quitters. They renounced and resigned the common joys of men, and hid themselves away in the deserts and lonely places, where only the faintest ripples of passionate life from the stormy sea outside could reach their sheltered inlet. It was one of the many terrible blunders into which the inexperience of the early disciples led them. Jesus was no quitter, even for the sake of the unruffled calm of a religious life. He came to send not peace, but a sword, in the face of the world's evils.

This we understand. It is not the part of a Christian to dodge or creep away from anything that his duty requires him to meet, whether fascinating or repugnant, or to renounce any normal joy that is the good gift of God to men. The self-denial that is required of us is not that of shutting our eyes to anything God would have us see, or of refusing any exquisite delight he would have us share. Our work may call us to pass through some strange associations, and

the glamor of them may be subtly demoralizing. But our Lord will be with us in all the daily round, and in his bracing company we might even live and work in the streets of Vanity Fair and take no evil.

That is the test of safety and loyalty for a strong man—to indulge himself in nothing that he must consciously break step with his Master to enjoy. If he and we can, so to speak, face in company life's sensuous appeals—well and good! But the character built on rock is one that for God's sake keeps stern guard over a clean heart, and lays its plans and shapes its habits for an unsleeping self-restraint.

CHAPTER IX

The Duty of Prayer

DAILY READINGS

Probably some of us would not consider the habit of prayer essential to the highest character. We are likely to regard it as a sort of an extra, or an accomplishment in the Christian life, not necessary for the average man but suited to people of a pious or strongly religious temper. We may turn to prayer instinctively in an emergency, but we do not feel the need of it or even see much place for it in the every-day life of the ordinary person. Moreover, we are not sure how far it is a reality, and the whole subject is clouded in these days with much perplexity.

If we are to leave it thus on one side, we have no choice but to leave Jesus on one side also as a spiritual guide. With him it was of primary importance. He not only included it among his commands, but gave it a position of prominence hardly exceeded by any other duty of life. And his frequent emphasis upon its necessity for right living is only a reflection of his own experience. He found it necessary for himself and won his personal victory with its aid.

We are compelled, therefore, to give it a leading place in any discussion such as this, dealing with character based upon his teaching. We count him a specialist in the art of noble living. His insight into spiritual realities was keener than that of any other human teacher. It worked out in his own life with marvelous results of strength and beauty. We take his judgment in the matter, then, as one of unrivaled authority. We are not now concerned with the views of the latest writer on psychology or philosophy, whose opinions in twenty years will have ceased to be of interest. We are

sitting at the feet of the unchallenged Master, and look to see what he thought about the place of prayer in the life of humanity.

Ninth Week, First Day

And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him; and they found him, and say unto him, All are seeking thee. And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth.—Mark 1: 35-38.

And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles.—Luke 6:12, 13.

It is natural that we should turn first to Jesus' own example. The force of his commands would be greatly reenforced if we found that they grew out of his personal experience. If that perfect character of his was the outgrowth of a life of prayer, it would be the strongest possible argument for the reasonableness and efficacy of such a habit. It is unthinkable that we should be superior to the need of a support which he found indispensable. If any man ever lived for whom definite times of prayer were unnecessary, that man was Jesus. We might justly say that, for him, to labor was to pray. He lived in harmony with his Father's will, and would seem to have had no need to trouble himself with special efforts to secure his Father's attention or win his sympathy. All excuses we make for our own indifference to prayer could be made with far more weight for him.

And yet when he was most busy and most in need of rest, he took the hours that belonged to sleep, in order to talk with God alone. His sense of need constrained him. The reality of the help of prayer was a greater refreshment than sleep. The moral triumph that he won, he won by its aid. And where he led the way he bids his disciples follow.

Unless Jesus was quite deceived, I am wasting the very

power out of which victory is won, if I allow doubts as to the theory of prayer to rob me meantime of spiritual contact with God.

Ninth Week, Second Day

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.—Matt. 6: 6.

Jesus puts the duty of prayer in the simplest and most uncompromising language possible, "Pray to thy Father." He seems to have assumed that it was something that all men would wish to do at times, and, indeed, probably all those to whom he spoke would have agreed with him. But even if he were speaking to the atheistic Bolsheviki of our day, or to those who are so one-sidedly cultured as to find no place for so quaint a survival as prayer, it is likely that he would use the same language, with a deeper earnestness of pity and invitation. It is his Gospel, on which he stands or falls as a religious leader, that all men may have a gracious hearing with the infinite Father of our spirits—the men who work in the mines, who lounge in the parlors of our fashionable clubs, who pasture their herds on the Mongolian plateau. Their very need, both in their trouble and their ill-desert, makes him attentive to their call, and his ear is not heavy that he cannot hear. It was not a new message, but Jesus wonderfully brought it home to men's attention, both by word and life.

In the passage for today he draws this unforgettable picture of the man who seeks to pray, getting away from his business and the crowd, going in to his inner room, shutting out the world. and there, in that loneliness and silence, talking heart to heart with Him who loves him and made him for Himself.

In the lonely night when you cannot sleep, when perhaps you are in anxiety or pain, then in a moment it will be true that God and you are there together in the silent room, and you will be telling him your need.

Ninth Week, Third Day

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?—Matt. 7:7-11.

"Ask and ye shall receive." This is one of the mountain peaks of Christian teaching. It stands up superbly clear above all the drifting clouds of theory and discussion. It does not argue or qualify; it calmly affirms. Whoever is sure that he knows better may deny; but he will never persuade more than a small circle that he is wiser than Jesus. The truth is somehow lodged among the indestructible instincts of humanity, pagan or Christian. You will find almost these same words on votive tablets in myriads of Chinese temples, telling how needy souls have cast themselves on Heaven to find, as they believed, response.

Jesus put this instinctive hope into the clearest language, and made plain the reasons for his confidence. We are not orphaned or alone here amid the physical environment of earth. Our Father is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He welcomes our childlike confidence in his sympathy and love. And how any little child can walk a dangerous way in company with his father and never turn to him for help or direction, passes one's understanding. Any philosophy of prayer that denies or obscures the relationship of a true filial dependence is not Christian. Any character that seeks to build itself up out of the sufficiency of its own resources, is not a character of Jesus' moulding. He finds in prayer the force that keeps us ever turning back to God; even our pain and sin and failure serve to draw us more longingly to Him.

It is our privilege to quote this promise times without number, if need be, as our warrant for casting ourselves on God for help; and times without number we shall thank Him for lifting up our heads.

Ninth Week, Fourth Day

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee? I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth.—Luke 11: 5-8.

In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.—Phil. 4: 6, 7.

The ease of mind that comes from reverently making God a confidant in matters great or small is much more than a mere spiritual luxury; it is a constructive element in noblest living. We have all met those who have spent their lives unselfishly for many years—it may be a mother at home or a Salvation Army worker in the city—whose faces are like a benediction in their peacefulness. Does anyone suppose it is by accident that this type of countenance belongs so conspicuously to those who have leaned hard on God through life's difficult places? Rather is it the unmistakable handwriting of obedience to Jesus' bidding, as given in this passage. He urges a childlike simplicity in availing oneself of God's unfailing readiness to help, in accordance with the old assurance, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee."

It would almost seem as though Jesus must have had in mind the objection so often heard today, coming from an over-refinement of delicacy about troubling God with our trivial affairs, that we should not worry the Almighty about the insignificant littlenesses of our daily life. Here again we have to choose between the advice of Jesus and the advice of those who come between us and him. He knew how trivial were even the largest interests of a peasant home, and yet he spoke this parable, urging those present hearers to commit their needs more fearlessly and trustfully to God.

O Lord, help us to venture confidently upon the sympathy of our Father, bringing to him our daily needs and perils, that we may be better equipped for every good work.

Ninth Week, Fifth Day

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.—Luke 22: 31-34.

Here is an example from our Lord's life of one kind of prayer, prayer for others. How many of us who are reading these words would be what we are today if it were not for the prayers of our fathers and mothers? They have been an unobserved but encompassing influence about us daily for many years. We cannot guess how much they have had to do with what we are. What they have done for us, we in our turn are to do for others. The highest type of character would seem to be that which is most efficient in its helpfulness for others, and Jesus sets forth this efficiency of intercession that should belong to those who follow him. He did the most he could for Peter at a certain crisis of Peter's life, by praying for him.

We simply cannot help sharing in this form of ministry if we are deeply seized with our Lord's spirit. The trouble is that we are generally too indifferent and too lazy to make this effort for our friends' good. We are not enough concerned for their welfare, and we shrink from the concentrated effort of such a labor on their behalf. To offer them sympathy, to jolly them up, to spend on them time or money, is easy enough. But to pray for them in their time of need! We avoid it and the thought of it, just as we shrink naturally from any task that demands a difficult concentration of thought and will.

Often there is no other avenue than this by which we can give any aid to a friend who is struggling with temptation.

Should we stand helpless at such a time if we heeded Jesus' words about prayer?

Ninth Week, Sixth Day

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.—Matt. 6: 9-13.

What do we know about what Jesus would really have men pray for, day by day—ordinary men, farmers and fishermen, and women in their homes? What did he expect them to talk about with God? Here are the beginnings of an answer, in this brief fragment that he taught his disciples. It has a place in it for food and clothing and the everyday wants that bulk so terribly in the lives of the poor, and for forgiveness and help and deliverance also. Jesus is not ashamed of any of these, as fit to claim God's notice. But before all else he turns men's thoughts to the great ambitions that transfigure the humble lot of those who seem hemmed in to petty things.

"Our Father" first of all! That is indeed "very good," as Little Joe said. Then comes a child's prayer for his father's honor, "May thy name be kept holy." There follows that brave, splendid, fighting prayer, that is the heart of the whole passage, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." It is not a passive utterance of resignation; it is the triumphant anticipation of a victory wide as humanity, and of the end of the long campaign, after battles and changes and overturnings past numbering, the triumph of God's love. It is a prayer like war music, making the blood thrill. It is a soldier's prayer for every day, around which to build one's life.

"Thy kingdom come" is like the great drive-wheel that keeps in balanced movement all the complex machinery of our hearts' desires. Are we fretted and depressed by irritating cares? Again and again and again, as we lift up our eyes to the great petition Jesus gave us, our lives fall into

order and peace, and our selfish pride sinks out of sight in that divine consecration.

Great praying makes great living, and the Lord's Prayer gives an infinite outreach to the daily wants we bring to God.

Ninth Week, Seventh Day

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me. And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done. —Matt. 26: 36-42.

"Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice." Here is our Lord himself passing through the deep waters, and crying for deliverance from his distress. Surely his Father heard his voice; but he did not save him from Pilate's hall, or the pillar of scourging, or the shameful hill of execution. He answered his prayer with strength sufficient to go forward unafraid, hour by hour, till the dread day was done. He gave him not escape, but glorious victory, which is what a true man most desires.

And so our Lord taught us vividly, not by word but by life example, how he would have us pray—not in the way of contesting God's will, or seeking to bend it to our purposes, but of seeking strength and faith enough to make His will our own, and accomplish what He has given us to do.

We do not have to think very long to see that the only safe way for us to choose in life is the way in which He would have us go. *The only thing we surely want is the*

thing our Father is wanting to give us. Death or life, joy or sorrow, we most want what his wise love would bring. And so we learn to say, Thy will be done.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

It is only true to say that all we have been studying up to now of the character approved by Jesus leads up to the subject of this week, the necessity of prayer. We have seen how all his commands find their full significance in the intent to relate men more closely to their Father in heaven. He bids them love Him, imitate His goodness, obey His will, and live life through, fearlessly and hopefully, as those whom He has made for Himself. It is as they draw near to Him that they are to become great in character.

All this presumes an intimacy of relation between men and God that seers and saints in all lands have dimly felt after, but that Jesus alone clearly enunciated and brought home to the understanding of common people. But how can there be such growing fellowship in character if there is no communication between the two? How can there be anything like such friendly intimacy if Father and son are held apart as if in different worlds? The whole development of character as set forth by Jesus seems to imply and rest upon a progressive acquaintance with God by men. And how is this to be if we can hold no speech with him? A boy might as well expect to make the acquaintance of his father and mother without ever a word being exchanged between them.

As a matter of fact, the life and teaching of Jesus everywhere assume the possibility of the interchange of thought between us and God, and the reality of a genuine spiritual fellowship. This interchange is not at the first of our seeking. Jesus makes it plain that it is we who draw away from God, and live as in a far country, where all communication is interrupted. Our sin makes us afraid of God, and our preoccupation with ourselves makes us unwilling to hold speech with him, lest it entangle us in unwelcome obligations. Always our Lord is urging men to draw closer to God. This is his Gospel—that God wants them and will receive them lovingly.

How, then, could he do otherwise than urge on them the habit of prayer? He put it before them not as a means of accumulating more things in their lives. or of dodging some of the hardnesses of this world of physical law, but as a means of self-realization as God's children. He drew strength from it himself for daily living, whether in the shop or in the temple, and he would have them walk with the Almighty as he walked.

II

Of course this is not the conception of prayer with which we start out as children. To most of us in childhood, prayer was simply a means, more or less reliable, of getting things that no one else could give us. But as we grow older, and come to realize what the battle of life really means, we begin to long for spiritual contact with God more than for anything else that life can yield. He, and he alone, has all the resources by which we are to triumph. We are ignorant, weak, doubting, selfish, easily tempted and led into unfaithfulness; he is glorious in strength and truth and love. We want to win our fight, to overcome evil, to hold out a hand of help to those at our side. And our weakness and our divine hunger for better things drive us to God. We cannot be what we would be without him. We cannot win through successfully alone. In our loneliness and defeat of soul we must be able to speak with him, and in the crises of life we do in fact turn inevitably to him for help.

This is what a well-known writer from the trenches means when he says: "Beneath all our inherited or intellectual differences there is an enveloping and penetrating necessity holding us together. . . . It may be described as the instinct for establishing and retaining contact with the Supreme Being. Perhaps the least objectionable covering phrase is 'prayer.' When speaking to our troops, whether in the camps of the back zones or in hastily gathered groups at the very battle-front, I found that the one subject that did not lead to controversy was prayer. In the uncertain or terror-shadowed or anguished periods of a man's life, everything that had once seemed inseparable from civilization and culture is swept away, and there remains only the instinctive impulse to establish contact with God. And the act is suffi-

cient, for the man becomes calm, brave, hopeful, or patient, as his need may require."

This is what prayer means on its deeper level—the satisfying of our human hunger for God. As the Psalmist expressed it long ago, and it is as true for the twentieth-century business man as for the tent-dweller of that distant past,

"O God, thou art my God; earnestly will I seek thee:
My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee,
In a dry and weary land where no water is" (Psalm 63:1).

III

But Jesus said, "Ask, and ye shall receive." That is very definite, very concrete, almost naive in its simplicity. It is a promise of "answers" to petitions. But how could Jesus have said less? When our poverty and weakness come in touch with God's strength and abundance, how can we do other than lay our need before him? If I am just at the point of breaking down under temptation or trial, how can I even look to the Father of all mercies without a cry for aid? In any case, men do not stop to argue about it. If they have caught a glimpse of the God of Jesus Christ, they turn to him in need as instinctively as a child to its mother. It is easy at this point to drown our intellect in mysteries until we can see nothing. But the heart has reasons of its own that cannot be permanently stifled, and in any of life's elemental moments we find ourselves turning to God for deliverance, in response to a deeper wisdom than the logic of argument.

Jesus, then, is only confirming the half-conscious conviction of the race when he says, "Ask, and ye shall receive." He illuminates and glorifies the vague expectation of humanity. He is not ashamed to say, "Ask." He is not speaking of the high spiritual converse possible to favored souls, but of the cry of a child, of the publican, or the penitent thief. Just as the wounds of a soldier are a passport to the mercy of a Red Cross nurse, so our wrongdoing or our distress is our claim on our Father's compassion. And the needs and failures of life are so many, and its emergencies are so various! If we are drifting easily with a favorable

current, we may not feel how inevitable and how constant is the demand for prayer; but if we are playing a man's part in the good fight, trying to lift others up, we shall be driven to ask light and help, to ask hungrily, to ask persistently.

Surely there is a great field of blessings in which our Father is more than ready to meet the requests of his children. Our prayers are really the coming to birth in our own minds and wills of the wishes God has for us. By our very asking with importunity, we make it possible for him to answer—as when we ask for courage or strength or forgiveness or equipment for service. The asking and the receiving cannot be far apart if the prayer is to be of use at all. Prayer in innumerable instances is a going forward to meet the gracious will of God.

Most of us cannot give a very adequate testimony to this direct and immediate benefit of prayer, because we have so imperfectly and timidly tested it. But it has been attested times without number by those whose character and service are the pride of humanity. It is worth thinking deeply, for example, on what one like Mary Slessor says, who, being much alone in the forest, "often had no other one to speak to but her Father," and so "just talked to him." She wrote for a friend these words:

"My life is one long, daily, hourly record of answered prayer. For physical health, for mental overstrain, for guidance given marvelously, for errors and dangers averted, for enmity to the Gospel subdued, for food provided at the exact hour needed, for everything that goes to make up life and my poor service, I can testify with a full and often wonderstricken awe that I believe God answers prayer. I know God answers prayer. I have proved during long decades while alone, as far as man's help and presence are concerned, that God answers prayer. Cavilings, logical or physical, are of no avail to me. It is the very atmosphere in which I live and breathe and have my being, and it makes life glad and free and a million times worth living. I can give no other testimony."

IV.

It does not need much reflection to see that the benefits for which one may ask hopefully are closely limited by a

variety of considerations. God does not place us in a world of ordered and, in the end, beneficent law, only that this law may be set aside whenever it interferes with our plans or runs counter to our wishes. Few of us would endure much hardness if the choice of it lay with us. Jesus was a man of prayer, but he was also the Man of Sorrows. And every one of those sorrows lay in some thwarted wish or purpose, some undesired trial or temptation, which he would hardly have chosen for himself could he have had his own wish for the asking.

Obviously that is not the sort of asking that he had in mind. It is no blessed method of escaping the unpleasant things or the bitter necessities of human life in such a world as this. Our childish idea of its unhindered field of operation has to give way to the facts. Even the old Hebrew idea, expressed here and there in the Psalms, of the earthly security of the godly, has to be explained and qualified.

But even when no immediate or direct response follows, Jesus finds his sufficient answer to prayer in the resulting acceptance of God's will. If we can rise to the point where we can make his will our choice, then, indeed, we have gained the victory and our prayer is answered. A small boy must have a good deal of faith in his mother if he decides that he wants for himself to go to the dentist's because she says it is necessary. He cannot know how necessary it is, but he relies on the wisdom of her love that he has otherwise proved in a hundred ways, and he has the manliness to accept the situation and go forward of his own free will without complaint.

We never get beyond the childhood stage with God, never get to the point where we dare to set up our own judgment of what is good for us, as against what he allows to enter our life. Would we dare refuse it if he bids us go forward to meet it? What do we know about the alternative that we would rashly and ignorantly invoke? Our only possible peace and security is in trusting that his love is guiding us, as though he held our hand. And how little would we dare insist on receiving the good fortune that to us seems so desirable! We should be afraid of it without his approval; it could only entangle us in difficulties unforeseen.

And so, when we come to plead the promise, "Ask, and ye

shall receive," we find our way wide open in one direction only, but otherwise straightly hedged about—we must ask as those who leave to God the way of answering. He hears our prayer. How can he but hear, in whom we live and move and have our being? He hears it, so Jesus says, with more than the affection of a father for his child. The answer we must leave to his loving will. Will not love answer? But he will not wrong us by giving what may not rightly be ours, for which we are not ready, or which might even bring subtle injury to our souls, or to those we love. We understand so little of the laws of the spirit, and our timidity and dread of suffering so overpower our judgment, that we dare not trust our own desires. We can only bring them to our Father, and talk them over under the illumination of his presence, and leave them with him, with a great gladness. We have talked with God! Everything outwardly may be the same as before, but it is not the same for us. We have left the matter with him. He and we stand now together, and we have no fear of the outcome.

V

Elizabeth Fry, the friend of the prisoner, left on record this witness, during her last illness: "I believe I can truly say that, since the age of seventeen, I have never waked from sleep, in sickness or in health, without my first waking thought being how I might best serve the Lord." No wonder she seemed like an angel from God to those desperate women she sought to aid. Imagine how great a character would be that was actually built up around the petition, Thy kingdom come. And many such there have been, in answer to the teaching of Jesus. The world is the better for them, and every such life is a fresh witness to the divine wisdom of him who left to his disciples so noble a prayer. Our lives must, indeed, be keyed to this note today, if they are to fulfil their completest mission to society. And how are they to be so perfectly brought under the dominance of this purpose, as by a daily waiting upon God for the establishing of his kingdom upon earth?

In this era of world reconstruction after the Great War, it is evident, as it has never been before, that only around this majestic ambition can the fortunes of the nations be

regrouped with any hope of stability. No lesser principle will ultimately answer. It is because President Wilson, in his various state papers, has clearly voiced a program for the nations that is based on a hearty acceptance of this principle, that the common people of the world have hailed him as their spokesman and champion. The elaborate statesmanship of Metternich or Palmerston must presently give way to the policy of a simple loyalty to the life-purpose of Jesus, that God's will might be done on earth in righteousness. All men are summoned to labor and pray that justice and mercy may take the place in international relations of pride, or greed of power, or racial hatred. The brotherhood of the family of God's children is, in these days of scientific efficiency of destruction, the only alternative to social suicide and ruin, so that, in a sense, the wide world is called today in this era of grave social peril to join for the protection of society in this prayer of Jesus. It is a prayer great enough for the common desire of all humanity, and it is simple enough for the life of the humblest individual.

In either case it is not a mere pious aspiration; it is a fighting prayer, unless it is only from the lips outward. To take this prayer honestly upon one's heart to God each day, in sincere longing for its answer, is not only to take into one's life a formative principle of constraining power, but to dedicate oneself to a cause against which all the powers of evil are arrayed. Every "interest" intrenched in selfishness, from the self-indulgence of a friend to the military pride of a nation, will resist it hotly. Any social propaganda that seeks only the good of a class is an instinctive enemy of such a prayer. Laziness and indolence and love of pleasure resent it to the last. Only the spirit of Jesus finds it altogether good and sinks its own advantage in the coming of God's will on earth.

But every day of one's life, this Lord's Prayer will call one afresh to a task that is never ended—a task that is wide as the world, and for all who would come up to the help of God against the mighty. If it were an unvoiced desire hidden in our hearts it would be a good thing, but to have it a petition that we bring to God each day—to face with him in all its bearings on our personal duty, to consider in the revealing light of his love and compassion for all men—is

to come into a fruitful fellowship with God that means sure ennoblement of life. To pray this prayer intelligently is to be kept at the heart of the good fight so long as our spirits may endure. And it is our Master's will that this should be true of us, every one.

VI

But because the Lord's Prayer is social in its terms, and associates us in our common needs indissolubly with the whole brotherhood of men, we must not forget that there is a place for prayer of the most personal and individual description. Such prayer can no more be called selfish than it is selfish to breathe or eat. It would be as reasonable to blame a drowning man for lack of altruism because he struggles fiercely for his life, as to blame the publican for praying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The deepest experiences of the soul are solitary of necessity, and the prayers of the ages bear witness that the sternest struggles of the soul have to be fought out in a great loneliness before God. The Psalms are pervaded with the sense of the solidarity of the people of God, and yet how many of them bear witness that, in sin and temptation, in sorrow and sickness and death, all else is lost sight of but the relation of individual dependence on God's lovingkindness. Indeed, we often gladly screen ourselves a little from the solemnity of this undivided responsibility to God by associating ourselves with our fellows; but in the moments of intense consciousness of our own wrongdoing, or our own need, this cannot be done. The shame and guilt of Peter, when he went out and wept bitterly, were such as he could share with no other soul, and his forgiveness and his joy when his Master sought him out after the resurrection could only be talked over between him and his Lord alone. When Paul lay blinded on the Damascus road, his prayer, "What shall I do, Lord?" was only the first of many that were intensely personal, though not selfish. In the deep waters of life it is the very solitariness of the soul that drives us to take refuge with God. Indeed, in grave illness or at the time of death even our closest friends belong as it were to another world, and the loneliness would be appalling but for the close presence of him who heareth prayer.

We need make no apology, then, for prayer that is as private and personal as is the unshared responsibility of our own soul to God. Our own battles must be won before we can effectively bring aid to our fellows; our prayer for others is of little worth until we have first found our way to him from whom help comes. And it is the peace and joy that we have won out of stress of soul, through many seasons of pleading with God for personal deliverance and forgiveness, that fit us for the privileged ministry of intercession for others. It is by the mercy of God that we are made able to take the needs and frailties of others on our hearts. It is not a matter of course that we shall all of us set to work at once to pray the unselfish prayer for our friends and companions, or for the needy classes in society. If it were, why is it that prayer-meetings have practically died out in so many college Associations? It is because the ordinary Christian, busy with his own affairs, has neither power nor taste for so divine a labor as that of praying for his fellows. He can neither see the use of it, nor has he the power to engage in it. The ability and the hunger for a ministry of help so rare and precious come only from the triumph of the Spirit of God in one's own soul. Only if we have won our own battle, only if we are proving for ourselves the reality of prayer, and its power to work marvels, is our heart set free to take upon itself with eager sympathy the needs of those who are fighting a losing fight. It is easy to talk of altruistic praying, but, as a matter of cruel experience, "except the branch abide in the vine," little enough of that sort of life will be circulating through our veins.

O Lord, lead us on until we are able in deed and in truth to pray the prayer of unselfish longing for our brother's good.

CHAPTER X

The Goodly Fellowship

DAILY READINGS

Criticism has always been suspicious of any recorded utterances of Jesus that looked beyond his tiny Galilean horizon or made provision for continuance of his work after his death. And yet he must needs have been a feather-brain indeed, if he had not pondered often and deeply on the problem of what would become of his work, and of his disciples also, after he was taken away. He was engaged with all the energy of his being in a clear-cut undertaking for the deliverance of men from evil. He drew his disciples after him into the same endeavor. Indeed, no one could share his life and spirit without being made a participant in his ambition and a partner in his enterprise of love. And Jesus clearly knew that he must die, and leave the continuance of his work to others. It is inconceivable that any thoughtful and far-seeing man in these circumstances should not have laid plans for the perpetuation of his influence and activity, and given instructions to those who were to follow him, so far as he could wisely do, for the effective perpetuation of his mission.

Such instructions we find, as a matter of fact, in the gospels—some few commands that looked to the maintenance on earth, long after he had left it, of the kingdom of love which he had founded and which he was to establish indestructibly by his death. The only wonder is that these forward-looking instructions are so few. They are not in the least degree what his followers in after days would have liked. They wholly lack the precision and detail of organization for which the ecclesiastic longs. They have chiefly to do with character, and are wholesome, natural, and of an extreme simplicity. They do not provide for the estab-

lishment of a new religion or the government of a church, but out of a passionate yearning for men they do enjoin a close-knit brotherhood of loving, loyal hearts, for the saving of the world. Christian character involves a readiness, then, nay, an eagerness, to stand shoulder to shoulder with this great ministering brotherhood.

This simple fellowship of faith and love has been worked out by the Church through the centuries in many ways. It has sometimes been elaborated to a complexity so artificial and burdensome as largely to smother its Founder's intent. But no imaginable development of human organization can hide the plain intent of our Lord that his disciples should cleave together and to him, so that his life and power might animate them with one spirit in the good fight for the Kingdom of God.

Some of these forward-looking commands of his, mere suggestions and glimpses of his thought, are discussed in the studies for this last week. The one characteristic they have in common is that they center closely about him, and draw their significance from his continuing activity.

Tenth Week, First Day

And as Jesus passed by from thence, he saw a man, called Matthew, sitting at the place of toll: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. . . . And as they went forth, behold, there was brought to him a dumb man possessed with a demon. And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. . . . Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.—Matt. 9: 9, 10, 32, 33, 38.

It cannot escape the notice of anyone who reads the story of Jesus, that he was not a mere preacher of righteousness. He came, it is true, to re-create men morally. But he did not hope to do this merely by sowing the seed of truth for a year or two, and leaving it to make its unaided impression upon character after his death. As we are often reminded, the chief influence in the formation of character is friendship

—the force of personality. Argument, exhortation, instruction, are all very well, but they are as nothing in comparison with the steady influence of a noble friendship. Jesus makes use of this principle as the primary force in uplifting men. They needed something that only he could give them. He met them with a straight command to follow him—not only to follow him, as disciples of a teacher who they believed was sent of God, but to take the heroic step of confessing him openly as Master, of identifying themselves with him and his cause. Manifestly this was not a force to operate only for a year or two while he was in Galilee, but, like all life's chief inspirations, it was to reach on and on into the future.

This step of open decisive confession was no cheap or easy condition. As he well knew, it searched the innermost intent of a man's heart. But its reaction upon character was and is amazing. It somehow stabilizes even a character hitherto weak and feeble, and founds it thenceforth, as Jesus said, upon the rock. This is not a matter of theory or of church doctrine, but of common human experience, repeated times past numbering. Such an open declaration of loyalty to him, such a definite crystallization of all our floating aspirations after the best we know, has the effect of a powerful suggestion of moral victory—a suggestion that is of incalculable potency and ever-renewed vitality. Our fortunes become consciously bound up with those of an invincible Leader.

Tenth Week, Second Day

Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.—John 17: 20-23.

So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the

chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.—Eph. 2: 19-22.

Dr. Jefferson has truly said, "You can be a savage alone, but you cannot be a Christian." To be a follower of Jesus is to be brought at once into the powerful and transforming fellowship of Master and disciples. The Christian type of character is developed under a surpassing dynamic of spiritual sympathy and cooperation. You cannot meet Jesus' requirements by capturing his religious and ethical philosophy and going off with it by yourself apart, to apply it in your own way, as though it were no one's business but your own, the private and individual concern of your own soul only. A dog with a bone gets off by himself for its undisturbed enjoyment, the more secretly the better. But a man whose heart has been touched by his Father's love comes eagerly and affectionately into the family, like a boy forgiven in the home. He draws closer to his Father—inevitably closer to those of a like devoted purpose with his own. His life expands and grows by its sympathetic contact with other lives.

Ever since Jesus lived among men, those whom he brought to God have instinctively clung together and to him. He bade them do so, in some such words as John's gospel has preserved—not in any mechanical outward uniformity of belief in a hundred matters of faith and form and government, as to which honest men have always differed, but in the genuine brotherly cooperation of the disciples of Jesus. This spontaneous and inevitable fellowship of the men and women who have found life in Jesus Christ constitutes the Church. It is always being reborn, reshaped, reanimated, as the millions who compose it gain new visions of what real discipleship means. But the goodly fellowship goes on, the fellowship of those who would realize through Jesus Christ what God would have them be, and would leave the world better for their living. And in its loyal association is the world's greatest training-ground of character.

Lord, help me to find some such place in thy Church that I may feel the heartbeat of the great family of redeemed souls dedicated to thy service.

Tenth Week, Third Day

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples.—John 15: 4-8.

Christians have always been accused of being so preoccupied with another world that they were unpractical and ineffective citizens in this. The charge has often been true. But it has been because they were poor Christians. Jesus left the plainest instructions at the very last, as he did at the beginning, that the primary duty of anyone who followed him was to bear fruit here and now. If they shared his spirit, they would do this to a certainty. His picture of the servants with the talents shows how he expects men to make the most of what they have, under just these tempting conditions when we seem our own masters. His teaching makes men practical and effective, first of all right in the town where they live. They are not effective always as money-getters or self-boosters, but quietly and steadily efficient in all those things that make a man a desirable member of society, the things that by love and sympathy are making the world a better place to live in.

After all, it is no worse to have one's thoughts engrossed with the prospect of a harp and crown hereafter than to have them selfishly monopolized with sport or study or even with getting ahead of the other fellow in business. Both courses are out of sympathy with the spirit of Jesus. He organized his followers on the basis of an association for service. And so, if life is before us and we have the shaping and spending of it in our hands, he calls us to make this our first concern; how we can bear the most fruit.

What sort of fruit any branch of that glorious Vine will

bear, we know well. Men saw it once in those Syrian homes, they see it today in every country under heaven.

O Lord, grant in thy mercy that they may see it in my life, too.

Tenth Week, Fourth Day

They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.—Acts 1: 6-8.

Anyone today who wished to revolutionize human thought on any subject would write a book, or several books, to extend and preserve his influence. Or he would at least have his lectures printed, or write to the newspapers, or in some way appeal to the world public, so that his spoken words might not fall to the ground and be forgotten like autumn leaves. Jesus left not even a scrap of paper, not so much as a letter to his mother or one of his friends. For a few months he talked with men, men mostly dull or thoughtless or impenetrably prejudiced. He added his voice to the babel of voices in that crowded Roman province, a single, misunderstood messenger among the thousand teachers of the empire. And then he vanished away, and there remained only the precarious memory of those spoken words, here and there where they had found lodgment in some hearer's mind.

It was an amazing confidence he had that these words of his, spoken by the roadside to the poor, would never perish—an almost incredible presumption, one might say. But he knew what he was doing. He left witnesses! They were just ordinary men and women, not influential people, or great scholars, yet men of such deep conviction and passionate devotion that they never could forget what he had done for them, or the vision of hope to which he had opened their eyes. The whole world structure of Christianity rests on their story of what they had heard and seen, a story of his living presence, renewed in each generation. To be a disciple

of Jesus means to be a man with a message of infinite helpfulness, based on personal experience. Jesus commanded his followers to take upon themselves this incalculable responsibility of commending him to their fellows. This personal endorsement of Jesus is the central force in the Church's extension of Christianity.

No book was necessary. You and I are his book today. Have we anything to say that would gladden a man's heart to hear, or would it only discourage and bewilder him?

Tenth Week, Fifth Day

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you.—Luke 22: 19, 20.

For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come. —I Cor. 11: 23-26.

It is safe to assume that every command of Jesus is directed to a real end in human welfare and has a reaction upon character. Here is a bidding which we in our day are apt to hold lightly, chiefly because it has been so extravagantly abused and because its true use is so little understood. But we cannot overlook it altogether, in a study such as this. The evidence for its genuineness is overwhelming. It has a prominent place in the first three gospels, is reaffirmed in one of Paul's earliest letters, and was evidently honored and obeyed by the earliest companies of Jesus' disciples.

Jesus left no imposing liturgy for the new brotherhood he founded. The humblest fraternal order in our land has a fuller ritual than any he ever hinted at. But he knew how easily men forget, how quickly their perspective of values

may be deranged, and he left this simple but touching service as a lasting reminder of his central place in their association. It was an outward symbol of an inward and eternal reality—the fact that their life was fed by him. His death was the culmination of his life, and his life and death made plain the love of God for men. As they remembered him and his perfect self-giving for their sakes, they would be kept in his love, and his life would flow through them.

This homely, familiar observance of eating a supper together, so different from the stately ceremonials of priestly worship everywhere, was to be a joyous memorial service, binding him and his followers together in a common life. Its power lay in its simplicity. It was intensely, almost pathetically, human. Overlaid by mystery, buttressed with dogma, it becomes portentous, bewildering, and the very ones are turned away whom Jesus would first invite to sit with him at such a feast—the faithful, honest souls who would do his will, but who cannot discern him behind the veil of a miracle-working sacrament.

We are losing some element necessary to the building up of character as Jesus would have it, if we are too timid or too careless to follow any one of his plain directions.

Tenth Week, Sixth Day

But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Matt. 28: 16-20.

To a world groping endlessly after God, Jesus brought a message of inexpressible gladness. Of course if, as many tell us, it was all a dream, that broke off forever with his death, then it was only natural that he should leave it to the oblivion in which it ended. But if it was indeed good

news of God, not for a day but for all days, then who can believe that he would not have left some such command as this for its spreading everywhere? If such a command were not recorded we should have had to imagine it, for it is the inevitable corollary of his life-work.

For himself, in his brief workday, he accepted the necessary limitation to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, even though he plainly looked beyond them to the many who should come from the east and west, and from the north and south, who should press into the Kingdom of God. But when his life-battle had been fought out to the victorious issue, and he handed on to his disciples the Gospel of God's love, he handed them their orders for the long campaign. He sent them to all nations. The message obviously was for all the children of his Father, Jew and Greek, and the unknown children of the forests below the edge of the world. And his followers were the King's messengers, by virtue of their having seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Freely they had received, freely they must give.

Have we any fault to find with this standing order which meets us as we take our place in the long succession, hoping to quit ourselves like men? Naturally, if the Gospel has only a theoretical worth to us, we would not sacrifice much to give it to others. But suppose our hearts tell us that it is worth everything! What then? *Is my contribution to the world-wide spreading of Christ's Gospel a fair measure of the value I set upon it, and of my gratitude to God?*

Tenth Week, Seventh Day

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.—John 14: 1-3.

We have come to our last study of the words of Jesus, and it leaves us looking far on beyond these familiar days under the sun. What manner of life there may be beyond the impenetrable veil, we do not know—perhaps no human words could make us understand. We only know from

Jesus that our Father is there, and that presently we also shall be there, still the children of his love. Then we shall see face to face, who now see darkly as in a mirror.

It was unmistakably the will of Jesus that men should live in triumphant hope of this deathless future. Hardly one clear word did he say to meet our curiosity as to its nature, and yet all he said assumed that present and future make but one life, and that death is only a passing interruption of its activity. Well he knew how profoundly character must be influenced by such an expectation. There are many days when life floats on as gayly as a streamlet in the sunshine. But gray days come, and days slow in passing, when it makes to us all the difference in the world whether we are going to the scrap-heap or are going home. This is where our Lord has gloriously reenforced our steadiness under strain, in that, through fair weather or foul, we know that we are going to our Father's house. "Where I am, there ye shall be also." David Livingstone would hardly have borne those years of appalling loneliness in the African forests had he not been cheered by thoughts of the great reunion that dawned on him at last in the little hut at Ilala where his journey ended.

What it may be to enter fully into the joy of our Lord, we cannot guess. But it is for him who has been found faithful in a very little. May we gather some foretaste of it along the way, as we go faithfully about the duties of the hour.

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

If Jesus had left carefully drawn up a constitution and bylaws for his Church, with an authoritative creed and catechism for its guidance, he would have met the idea of a large group of his followers from that day to this. But he would have left a yoke he had not the least wish to impose. His yoke was easy and his burden was light, wherein his Church has not always resembled him. And so, as a matter of fact, he rarely alluded to the Church that was to be. He spoke most earnestly and plainly on many things

that seemed to him of first importance, but the organization of the Church was not one of them.

Did he, then, leave his disciples without any principle of cohesion and cooperation, to take effect after his departure? He did not! He gave them what they needed for most successful growth. He gave them a unifying principle stronger than any other that mankind has ever known—that of a supreme devotion to a common leader and a common cause. It has been, and always will be, a tie as strong and flexible as tempered steel.

The story of the way in which this tie has held through the ages is one of almost incredible wonder, when we remember the buffetings through which the Church has come. Any fixed creed and constitution would have withered into hopeless inadequacy, long before now. But the living principle on which he organized the ever-growing host of those who should follow him thrills with the currents of spiritual force today, as truly as on that night of fear when his nearest friends hung on his last words. It is a principle of vital association with himself, adapting itself to the needs and comprehension of every age. As we see it worked out, there in Judea long ago, or in the slow disappointing centuries of fear and superstition, or among the people of the twentieth century whom we know, the energy that pulsates through it is from him. It is not the church machinery or the church creeds or the church sacraments that generate the power; but as men living in his fellowship absorb his spirit, they learn to live the sacrificial life that actually redeems.

It is this circle of faulty men and women, learning every day to live as Jesus would have them live, which makes up the Church. Whether Greek, Roman, or Protestant, Methodist, Quaker, or Presbyterian, as the faces of men grow gentle with the gentleness of Christ, we recognize the presence of the true Church of Christ. And it is a tragedy for a true man to be found in critical alienation from its fellowship. He who hears the words of Jesus and does them finds his fitting place humbly and loyally in the ranks of those who have confessed Him before men. He asked it of his friends once, and his friends until today find it a reasonable and a rewarding thing to do.

II

We all know the type of man who can never be brought to play the game. Something is lacking in him that is necessary to the make-up of the all-round man. In school, or in college, or on the team, or in any of the hundred organized activities of neighbor and citizen, he always wants to play a lone hand. He can never be brought to see the necessity for team play. There is some contrary element in him that makes him the despair of leader or captain in any concerted or effective action whatsoever. He is a fruitful source of irritation and defeat all along the way. Only when he comes up against the stern mandate of a nation plunged in war, does he find his lifelong individualism overridden and set at nought. Then, in spite of himself, he is made to serve the public good in the way of complete cooperation.

But a character like his is plainly an imperfect character. His own tastes and opinions are so overshadowingly important that he can never subordinate himself to a common purpose for a common good. He can be a free lance, but he can neither be a soldier nor a comrade nor a man under any discipline or constraint whatever, except that of his own self-will. And the worst of it is that he is likely to pride himself on his superior intelligence and independence. He does not see what a poor skulker he is in times of supreme need, when men are giving themselves and all they have in concerted sacrifice for the common good.

Jesus built his disciples' character on lines exactly the opposite of this. He could not do otherwise, being what he was. He was consecrated through and through—to the last ounce of his energy—to a great social mission, divinely loving and beautiful. He had but a handbreadth of time in which to give to men the first vision of his evangel. And then he had to leave the long, long fight to them. He would be with them in spirit and would cheer them on, but they must stand as one man against a world in arms. If ever concerted life and action were necessary, it was then; not only because of the uncountable odds against them, but because their very purpose and method were those of love, and if they themselves did not illustrate and enforce it, they were defeated from the start. This trait of character, de-

manding subordination of selfish plans to the welfare of the group, was to be the distinguishing mark of his followers. "By this," he said, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." He knit them up in a closer comradeship than that of an army, "for my sake and the gospel's." To be true to the teaching of Jesus is to be willing to play the game, in its demand for close association in intensive life and effective action.

If the Church had only obeyed his bidding, she would have swept through that old weary pagan world as Garibaldi and his legion swept through Italy. But the more intricate and elaborate her organization and her creeds became, the more heresies and divisions multiplied, until even the heathen jeered at the spectacle of angry discordance she presented. It is wonderful how for a thousand years under these conditions the clear spring of truth kept flowing, though so many muddied the stream just below the source. But now we are once more seeing the real intent and command of Jesus, and we are hearing penitently his call to get together on the simple basis of obedience to him, that we all may be one, in love and loyalty to Leader and Cause, in effective cooperation.

It certainly does not call for the churchman's dream of outward unity under one name and method and government; but it does call for a true brotherhood and discipleship, proudly confessed, and it leaves no place for the man who would take all that Jesus can offer of moral inspiration, and shirk all that he asks in sacrificial dedication. *Christo et Ecclesiæ* may seem dead enough as an outgrown corporation motto, but it is written in letters of living light over against all who would build character under that Master-Builder.

III

Among thoughtful young people today there is an undoubted reluctance to attend the Lord's Supper, even when they are members of the church. This is natural enough; for there has probably been more of unreality at this point than at any other in the whole field of church observances. Ever since the first century, it has been thrust into a position of strained and artificial significance, for which the simple directness of Jesus' teaching affords no warrant. There is

little doubt among scholars of today that the doctrine of the eucharist was deeply affected by the "mystery religions" of the Orient, especially those of Isis and Serapis and of Mithra, which gave so large a place to the secret rites of sacramental cleansing from sin.

In any event, long before the downfall of paganism, the Lord's Supper was generally accepted as a sacrament in which there was not only the "real presence" of Christ, but "a sacrifice, offered to God by a priest, inclining God to be gracious to the living and the dead." For nearly a thousand years the mere participation in the sacrament was held to be the chief means of building up Christian life. Private Bible-reading or study of the teaching of Jesus was for obvious reasons practically unknown, and for the most part there was no adequate instruction from school or pulpit. The miraculous transference of life by means of the real presence in the eucharist was relied upon to effect, thaumaturgically, what we of today recognize can be achieved only by patient instruction in God's truth and a hearty obedience to his will.

Surely it is not strange that the pendulum is now swinging well to the other side. As we turn back to Christ and make his own words the standard for our thought, we find nothing to warrant the dogmatic assertions of the Church, insisted on through ages of fierce and bloody contention that made a tragic mockery of this bond of loving fellowship.

Yet no accumulation of human imaginings can blind us to our Lord's intent, or hide the fact that even in its distortions this memorial of a vital union with the Master has been the inexpressible consolation of his people. We cannot afford to disregard any of his plain commands; to do so is to lose something vital to the upbuilding of the richest character. The enlisted man is not free to pick and choose among the orders of his commanding officer, according as he fully understands the purpose for which they are given. If we have grave doubts whether we fully grasp the significance of the sacrament, let us share in it gladly for what we are able to perceive, hoping that little by little its depth of meaning may grow upon us.

And this much we clearly can perceive: that it is a memorial service of loving remembrance of our Lord, a

symbol of our real participation in his life, and an outward sign of our endless fellowship with all the company of those who love him and call him Lord, whether in heaven or on earth. Not one of us, for our soul's sake, can afford to forsake an observance so vital, so uplifting, so glorious, which knits us up forever with the household of all faithful souls.

IV

Many of us remember how the young Free Kirk minister in "The Bonnie Brier Bush" was led by his mother's memory "to say a gude word for Jesus Christ" in his first sermon. Of all that human lips could utter, there surely is nothing greater or more good to hear. The world-pervading influence of Christianity rests, after all, not upon any philosophy skilfully adapted to modern thought, but upon the simple testimony of human lips that the faith of Jesus Christ is a power that redeems life, that it yields life at its best. Where this testimony dies out, there Christianity ceases to be the real thing, and presently becomes a pretentious shadow of its true self. Where it is spoken with the earnestness of genuine conviction, there it is like a spreading fire, whether the speaker be brought up like Phillips Brooks in the best American culture, or like Gypsy Smith, in a wandering caravan.

It is a wonderful thing that a little working girl from a drunkard's home should grow up, like Mary Slessor, to have her word run unchallenged as beneficent law through unknown regions of forest in savage Africa, because she spoke so plainly and lovingly of what Jesus means to men today. But Christian character at normal level means the participation in just this life-giving witness, in ways great or small. Let the burden of proof rest on us if this is not so. Why can we not help to pass on the blessings that have come to us through him, mediated it may be in many respects through generations of his loyal followers? Why should not we be messengers of God to needy people in our time? Is it fitting and necessary that, in this central matter of knowledge of the Life-giver, we should spread doubt and dejection and disappointment, only to sap the chief resources of moral regeneration in society? It may be our deep misfortune to

be so entangled in doubts that the only message of inspiration we can bring to society is that "we do not know." But if this is not so, if the goodly faith brought by Jesus Christ is actually redeeming our lives, why should it not be we who have the privilege of passing on the living faith to others?

There are numberless ways of serving society, and whether it be the washing of dishes at home or the shaping of a world's diplomacy in the court of nations, the glory of God's service may rest upon them all. But surely he who lifts men up toward God, who ministers spiritual strength and deliverance and comfort to hard-pressed men and women, has a task that is to be envied before all others. For a minister without a living message, who merely discusses the questions of the hour or hands on ethical and theological conventionalities, his task is stupid drudgery. But if one might share the work that Jesus once did in Palestine, a work of love, brightened with hope and strong in the confidence of God, that would seem to be the highest privilege a man could ask on earth. Hemmed about with limitations, many of us have yet found it so. *Then why not I, in some one of the hundred lines of spiritual ministry?*

V

Great character can hardly be had without great thoughts on which to nourish it. The Bolshevik outlook will breed Bolshevik selfishness. Many a plain Scottish peasant, pondering even at the plow-tail on the majesty of God and the wonder of His purposes for men, has been, like Carlyle's father, one of God's nobility. Jesus' plan of character-building did not rest on mere exhortation to go forth to a life of service. It showed its divine quality by equipping men for it. It lifted men's eyes to such spacious horizons and attuned their thoughts to such thrilling hopes, that mean, narrow, selfish living became impossible.

A weakness of our time is that it seeks to get whole-souled devotion without deep conviction, and a life of the highest service without the highest inspiration. A poor cobbler sitting at his bench in a tiny English village faces a map of the world hung opposite him upon the wall; and looking at it day by day, as through the eyes of his Master, he lays

down his cobbler's tools to win one of the greatest names of his generation as scholar and benefactor. But nothing less magnificent than the imperial scope of the thought of Jesus could have lifted William Carey out of his petty provincialism and made him an apostle to the peoples of India.

It is not an afterthought, then, nor an extension of the proper scope of these studies, that we should consider last of all our Lord's call to a world-wide mission and to the power of an endless life. They are immediately germane to the enterprise of character-building. The man who, for the sake of effectiveness and intensity, limits his outlook to his own circle and the years just at hand, deliberately cripples the wings that might lift him to a larger and more generous life. He dislocates himself from the spiritual environment in which his Master lived—and little does this make for efficient living. There is, of course, no direct connection between the two ideas. But they remind us that the commands of Jesus, that began with the infinite outreach of the call to love God, leave us all still face to face with a supreme duty and a supreme anticipation. We may be busied every day with the labor of winning our bread and butter, but we live and move and have our being in a mental environment that is divinely wide and wonderful.

Consider for a moment the reaction upon character of a faithful acceptance of the "great commission." Millions of our fellow-citizens in these recent months have come into a relation of genuine sympathy with peoples who a few years ago were wholly outside the circle of their interests. Farmers' homes in California and Kansas and Virginia today have actually been saving food for the starving in Belgium and Serbia and Poland and Syria, and doing it voluntarily and intelligently, because we in this country feel ourselves in the place of a big brother to these other peoples in their distress. The common people of America have a stake in those countries today, and we can never again shrink back into the petty provincial limits that once bounded our interests. It has immeasurably enriched the life of Americans that we should have been compelled to pour out both money and life for those who we once thought had no claim on us whatever. We can no longer rest in our peace and plenty while whole peoples die of oppression and starvation.

Jesus directly commends to the sympathy of every Christian man the whole vast family of those for whom He gave Himself. We exult in the possession of a spiritual inheritance that makes life great; we have learned through it how to find life at its best. He calls us to be as the big brothers of those who are helpless or degraded for lack of just what we possess. The knowledge of the love of God has made rich and sacred for us all the deep joys of life. It is our concern that millions in Africa are left to a bestial savagery that robs them of life's sweetness. What have we to do with a peace and plenty that we do not even take the trouble to share? Every day we live comes under the constraining force of this appeal, to take thought for the poorest creatures who dwell with us under the blue sky of our Father. So far as we truly sympathize with them we think our Lord's thoughts after him. And this greatens life, in every one of its relationships. There are few pastors but could tell of those in their circle of acquaintance who have been transfigured from commonplace pettiness and lifted morally to a higher plane by their growing interest in the spread of the Kingdom of God.

This is not theory, but simple fact. Here, for instance, is China struggling tragically to get upon its feet as a republic. After ten years of terrible effort and confusion, it finds itself balked for lack of character—just for want of enough men of integrity in high places. Whatever its religious systems may once have been, they have not now the power to cleanse men's lives of selfishness; and so, in spite of all changes in form of government, the old graft breaks out everywhere and thwarts the hopes of those who long for China's regeneration. It is no wonder that Mr. Eddy, on his last visit, everywhere found thoughtful Chinese sobered by sense of this great need—the need of men of incorruptible integrity, such as the Christian faith produces, men like Wilson and Taft and Roosevelt, like Lloyd George and Balfour and Bryce, soldiers like Pershing and Haig and Allenby and Beatty, and thousands of others in lesser places but not of lesser fidelity.

This illimitable need of China, of such profound consequence to the rest of humanity, our Lord directly commends to the young men and women in Christian lands today. A

hundred trivial fancies and interests that tease us for consideration are driven out of sight as we face honestly this vast appeal for help, now at this time, which our Lord endorses. Can we find anywhere a more satisfying ambition than that of building the infinitesimal contribution of our lives into the development of this great people? Even if we cannot respond in person to the appeal, can we measure the effect upon our lives of a perfectly honest attempt to understand and face it, and of a lifelong sympathy with the army that is giving itself to this divine campaign?

It is not, then, a matter of little moment whether or not we give heed to this last command.

VI

It is easy to point out ways in which belief in the future life has been allowed to prejudice the dignity and importance of the life that now is. But the example and teaching of Jesus have the opposite effect. He knew that his few years in Galilee did not tell the whole story of his existence. Carpenter he was, and then teacher. But life held more for him than mending benches or addressing crowds; and death was only the gateway to its extension. All the dignity and glory of that endless life he centered on these tasks of the hour. It was his meat and drink to do in Nazareth the will of his Father in heaven. He perfectly gave himself to being faithful in a very little. The very fact that his workingman's job was part of a majestically far-reaching whole, made it great and satisfying.

And so he taught his disciples to think of their work on earth. It was not the whole of life for them, and all the more fervently and joyously were they to live it out on that account. Their life was not to dwindle down in senile decay, till they were glad to be rid of it as no longer worth the living, but was to open out with death into new powers and new responsibilities, for which these earthly days should be the preparation. That unknown future lay in their Father's hand, all unrevealed. Only the present was theirs, and on it their whole capacity for service should be centered.

Jesus sent out his disciples as helpers of society. They were to spend themselves for the good of their fellows in such ways as God should open to them. That is what you

and I are indubitably called to do. And it enhances immeasurably the interest and dignity of our efforts that the material on which we work is of matchless quality, of endless durability. Those who remember the Centennial Exposition will remember an amateur sculptor of that day who worked in butter, and whose groups, modeled out of that material, were held to show genuine artistic ability. But it is poor business working with such perishable stuff. Only bronze and marble are lasting enough for a true artist to be content to spend effort upon them. If the boys and girls for whose characters we labor, in classes or clubs or settlements, are presently to pass out of existence like the cattle in the meadows, then the glory of our work is largely gone. It may still be necessary, but never again can it seem to us as it would if their ennobled lives were to remain and grow without end for the glory of God. To accept Jesus' teaching as to the unending life, is to find the completest inspiration for social service.

We count ourselves by faith the servants of God, the friends of him who was the Great Friend of men. We shall go about our work today with more courage and elation if we know that this friendship is not of a beggarly and disappointing inconclusiveness, leading us on a little way till we are sensible of longings and capacities utterly beyond our present attainments, and then plunging us into the last irretrievable disappointment of death without a future, as those who have no further use or place in all God's universe. If this is all we mean to God, if this is all the value of the love he asks from us as children, then we are forlorn indeed when life begins to lose its vigor. But if the friendship is not to be broken, if he with whom we walk by faith today is to come within our sight tomorrow, if the dawning capacities for love and righteousness are a promise of what shall be, then, O Lord, help us to exult in any service we may do for thee, knowing that presently we shall be like thee, when we see thee as thou art.

After all, it is not so much through the commands of Jesus that men find the needed power for right living, as through the invitations that underlie them. The more we study his life, the more we realize that as a whole it conveyed to men the invitation of infinite love. He gave him-

self perfectly to human need, that we might surely know how our Father longs after his children, and how he goes in search of them in tender ways, to draw them to himself. And it is this invitation, and the manner of his giving it, that have chiefly held the gaze of thoughtful men through the centuries. The commands are our marching orders—we must look to them to see what he would have us be. But the will and power to obey them steadfastly, like good soldiers, grow strong within us as we accept in gratitude the everlasting forgiveness and renewal that he brings. Only the character built up under this firm constraint of love answers fully to the purpose of the Master-Builder.

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